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Transnational Public Relations in Postcolonial Spaces: Making Space for other Discourses in the Afghan Public Sphere

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TRANSNATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS IN POSTCOLONIAL SPACES: MAKING SPACE FOR OTHER DISCOURSES IN THE AFGHAN PUBLIC SPHERE

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ABSTRACT

TRANSNATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS IN POSTCOLONIAL SPACES: MAKING SPACE FOR OTHER DISCOURSES IN THE AFGHAN PUBLIC SPHERE

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Dissertation supervised by Erik A. Garrett, Ph.D.

This dissertation takes up Wakefield's (1992) call to build theory for international practices of public relations activities. It offers a transnational approach to public relations, providing a theoretical foundation and a case study for the conceptualization of transnational public relations. The theory and practice of transnational public relations proposed in this dissertation incorporates a rhetorical approach that is sensitive to the social, political, cultural, religious and gender issues inherent in postcolonial spaces. Eschewing a rhetorical approach based on civil society discourses or democratic institutional discourses, this project is attentive to listening and responding to a multiplicity of voices in incorporating a culture-centered approach to public relations in postcolonial societies. The theory is rooted in an intersubjective approach that seeks to understand the lived experience of the Other, specifically the realistic situation of the

lived experience of marginalized peoples. In particular, this dissertation studies the application of transnational public relations in activist contexts through the case study of a nongovernmental organization working on the ground in postcolonial nations in order to make space for women in the Afghan public sphere. In its activist transnational public relations work, the Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality (WISE) aims to uncover the possibilities of rhetorical interruptions to dominant discourses and hegemonic employment of power in the Afghan public sphere.

DEDICATION

To:

Mamma, who showed me how faith can be a source of strength.

Papa, who raised me to have an active mind, an opinion and a voice.

Yas, who shows me how to do work born of the world one is rooted in.

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> We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must - at that moment - become the center of the universe (Wiesel, 1986, para. 8).

My dissertation focuses on transnational public relations practices based on an underlying attentiveness to the relationship between culture and power in the Muslim public sphere in current day Afghanistan, and how rhetorical challenges to hegemonic relations and discourses that develop in this culture can impact the position of women in this postcolonial public sphere. Basing my work on public relations efforts of non-governmental organizations, I examine the demands and constraints of place, time, culture and audience that affect choices made by speakers to influence the moment. I evaluate the way these organizations address the dominant discourses of influential leaders in society to affect social change and make space for women in the Afghanistan public sphere.

One component in this issue focuses on the use of language and power in public relations efforts. The social construction of meaning in activist public relations within and between cultural practices and norms calls for the role of rhetorical discourse and a nuanced understanding of the role of power among different actors in this discourse. It is not enough to just assume the traditional notion of ascribing relative power to the public relations speaker, but

in a rhetorical model of public relations, one should recognize the power balance in relationships of the actors and the negotiation of power between these discursive actors (Curtin & Gaither, 2005). The Foucauldian notion of power (Foucault, 1980) continually shifts and is an ever-changing and negotiated entity between the actors in a discursive relationship. In the rhetorical model of public relations, discourse both shapes and is shaped by society (Heath, 2009). Public relations campaigns use language to construct meaning and seek to influence the views of the publics they communicate with. Public relations organizations are instruments of power as they have a voice that is afforded a position in the public sphere provided by their publics, and they also depend upon the support of their publics on whom their power depends (Henderson, 2005).

Since this dissertation studies the work and operation of public relations efforts of non-governmental organizations based both within and outside Afghanistan, one needs to look at the issue of transnational public relations. The issue of intercultural or transnational public relations is particularly important and gains immediacy where technology is bringing people closer to each other in a 'global village' (McLuhan, 1962) or where new conflated terms like 'glocalization' (Roudomotef, 2005) are gaining popularity in academic discourse and popular press. It is also necessary to explore whether and how public relations can work across national and cultural boundaries. Work in the area of transversality (Schrag, 1992) and dialogic cosmopolitanism (Jordaan, 2009) seeks to validate the idea of transnational social justice efforts by proposing that moral standpoints can be non-ethnocentric, and can be expanded in ways that supersede the boundaries of political and national community, moving towards treating the values and morals of the other with respect while indulging in dialogue. Such communication is attentive to differences across which communication can take place.

This project also focuses on the importance of studying gender and feminist perspectives in public relations. It is important to focus on gender as a constraint on communication as is the case in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. Feminism is concerned with "social and political movements aiming to bring justice into society so the marginalized can choose their positions instead of being pushed into positions where they are" (Liao, 2006 as quoted in Aldoory, 2009, p. 111). In this case, public relations activism is attempting to provide a space for women and free them from the constraints of a patriarchal society that limits and marginalizes them (Benard, 2002; Emadi, 2002; Skaine, 2002). Aldoory (2009) states that feminist research includes a critique of gender power relations, the study of everyday life/discourse, a representation of multiple voices, an understanding of historical context, and reflexivity. The philosophy of nongovernmental organization and the objectives of their public relations campaigns being studied are stated to be the promotion of women's rights awareness, human rights with emphasis on gender, and gender equality in the case of Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality (WISE, 2014). In evaluating the philosophical ground of the organization and its public relations practices, focus is on the rights and equality of women in Afghan society.

This project centers on the Afghan public sphere as the place where this discourse plays out. In this context, it is necessary to study the notion of first, the public sphere as the space where rhetoric can be employed. The modern western conception of the public sphere according to Jürgen Habermas (1991) is a place where a collective body of citizens –the public – makes societal meanings through the process of public speech and deliberation. In present day Afghanistan though, the kind of public space afforded to the Muslim societies in fundamentalist regimes is a much different reality than the Western concept of the bourgeois public sphere illustrated by Habermas. Hoexter, Eisenstadt, and Levtzion (2002) point out the characteristics

specific to the Muslim public sphere in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*. They write that the central analytic point of non-Western public spheres is the close relation between culture and power. The public sphere in Muslim societies pays great importance to the relations between power and culture (Foucault, 1980), the challenges to the hegemonic relations and discourses that develop in these societies. People in positions of power in these societies operate differently and have a vastly different understanding and import of the meanings or ideas constructed in the public sphere than do people who are lower on the hierarchy of power in the society. Consequently, the relations among the agents of these broad and various groups within the society and the specific dynamics generated by interactions of these groups also have a role to play in the public sphere. Local and political elites and groups who have a certain power may be able to control the public sphere and guide the voices emerging from it. Some Muslim public spheres may also have constraints on the thought and conduct of the people within the society as a result of historical and religious influences, as is the case in Afghanistan (Cole, 2003). Historically, Islamic society has been interested in created religious public spheres (Hurvitz, 2002) where there is a struggle over dominating people's imaginations as well as boundaries between rulers and the subjects, and the public and the private. Public relations activism, the focus of this dissertation, challenges these dominant voices prevalent in such public spheres and provides a different narrative to marginalized individuals who are not given a chance to express themselves in such public spaces (Dutta, 2011).

The case of Afghanistan is studied as a particular situation and space for the activities of the public relations practitioners. The current public sphere in Afghanistan consists of the predominantly Muslim population of the country, and the particular religious and historical influences that led to the shaping of a public sphere in Afghanistan are varied and wide-ranging.

Social, political and religious determinants have shaped the Afghan public sphere (Cole, 2003). As the recent history of the country demonstrates (Afghanistan, 2015), the emerging generation of Afghans has only known bloodshed, displacement and occupation. The imposed totalitarian regimes, war, upheaval and a nomadic refugee camp life did not leave a chance for the ideals of personal autonomy or the public sphere to emerge in particularly the lower economic strata in Afghanistan. The largest effect on the role of women in the current public spaces in Afghanistan can perhaps be said to be caused by the Taliban regime. The effect of the Taliban on Afghan society during 1996 and 2001 reconfigured the public sphere in the country in tune with an "Islamic countermodernity" (Cole, 2003, p. 773). The Taliban's almost complete power over Afghanistan during the earlier part of the century was the result of the use of modern techniques like the state, mass spectacle, radio, and demonstrations of armed power. Towards the turn of the last century, radical Islamism imposed by the Taliban coded women as essentially subjective and private, which excluded them from the public sphere. Elements like coeducation, mixing of the genders in work settings, entry of women into traditionally male professions and consumerism were actively opposed by the Taliban.

The questions I am interested in exploring through this project are: How can we conceptualize the public sphere in postcolonial societies. How do we navigate the issues of power and hegemonic discourse in these spaces and make place for the marginalized voices to enter this public sphere? And how should PR practitioners approach public relations in these transnational or postcolonial places?

Importance of the Project

My interest in this topic is driven by a desire to understand the complex relationships between rhetoric, intercultural and religious communication in developing Islamic nations. As a

Muslim woman from India studying in a Roman Catholic institution working in the Spiritan tradition, my background and experiences have led me to an interest in issues of diversity and difference in communicative praxis, and this interest opens up the door to participate in scholarship about an age increasingly marked by transnational and interreligious misunderstanding and symbolic violence.

Added to the above, the coverage of Islam and Muslim actors in the media is increasingly focused on radical or fundamental notions of a select few (Ibrahim, 2010) and my desire to work within this field and discover other narratives that remain underdeveloped, or just untold, is fueled by the need to present another view of something that is an intricate part of my value system and identity. In a world where Islam and its followers are increasingly being labeled as the distant Other (Ramji, 2003) in popular media, the stakes to understand the variegations of Muslims and Muslim societies has never been higher. This work would help in providing an alternative voice to the predominant discourse that is seen to be shaping the Muslim identity.

The voices of Muslim women are especially important to me, as being one, I have been deeply aware of (at times) being defined by other people without my voice being heard or acknowledged in the matter. The dominant discourses about women, and Muslim women especially, portray them as cultural icons or a public that 'need to be saved' (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Hirji, 2005) instead of understanding them as the product of particular histories, socio-political circumstances, and different desires or opinions about their fate. This project rejects the cultural relativism that these dominant beliefs force on Muslim women and tries instead to provide a space for their voices to be heard (Dutta, 2011).

Finally, in working within the context of intercultural public relations and transnational rhetorical engagement, this work would allow me to work towards exploring the ethical and

moral contributions that communicative actors in general, and public relations and transnational activists in particular can be said to have in the world. An Other-centered discourse that seeks to understand and listen to the voices of the marginalized has a contribution to make in providing a space for those discourses to be heard in the larger public sphere (Dutta, 2011). Providing agency and control to the marginalized to tell their own stories is essential for them to display their identity in a hermeneutic of the self (Ricoeur, 1975). Through this work, I hope to contribute to the larger discourse about the relationship between rhetoric, intercultural and religious communication in a cosmopolitan world.

Methodology

I first examine the literature concerning the various areas of study I have laid out above - the notion of the public sphere both as a western concept and as it would manifest itself in postcolonial or Islamic nations, the interaction of culture and power in discourse and public relations, the case for transnational public relations - and determine how these disparate areas interact with one another. I also look at how these areas impact the particular case of public relations being practiced in Afghanistan.

The study is based on the work of a nongovernmental organization that is working for the cause of women's rights in Afghanistan as one of its many programs - the Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality (WISE, 2014). The program that is evaluated is detailed on their website, including evaluations and reports with regard to its implementation. This material is examined to gain insights into the work as well as the development of the particular program. In addition to the materials, overall public relations strategy and tactics of the organization and their underlying philosophy is evaluated. The rhetoric of this organization as well as particular public relations campaigns provide insight into applied transnational public relations.

Chapter Two - The Public Sphere

In the second chapter, I examine the notion of public sphere and how it functions in various places. I start with examining Habermas' (1991) notion of the public sphere, which depicts an essentially western orientation towards the notion of a public space and human interaction within it. In *The structural transformation of the public sphere*, Habermas lays out a view of the representation of the people in public spaces and the necessity of rational debate within these spaces. In the eighteenth century, the public sphere emerged as an essential necessity for individuals in civil society to articulate their views. However, because of societal and economic changes, the public sphere is no longer a space that is free of manipulations by self-interested organizations. The news and media hold power in the public spaces now and have the ability to mold public opinion (Lippmann, 1946).

An alternate view of the public sphere has been articulated by Hauser (1999) in *Vernacular voices: The rhetoric of publics and public spheres*. Hauser argues for an existence of "a plurality of publics located in multiple arenas of a reticulate public sphere in which strangers develop and express public opinions by engaging in one another through vernacular discourse" (p. 12). Hauser's work is applicable to this project as he is talking about the way vernacular conversations shape public opinion. By looking at vernacular discourse itself, Hauser attempts to study public opinion. This is important to the project as a bridge between the western conception of the public sphere and public opinion by Habermas into a more oriental or postcolonial conception of the same.

The particularities of the Muslim public sphere are explored by Hoexter, Eisenstadt, Levtzion (2002) in *The public sphere in Muslim societies*. This work looks at the various implementations of a public sphere in premodern Muslim societies. Local and political elites

have a powerful role to play in the public sphere in these societies, which are examined in the discussion about the Taliban and the role of religious leaders in the Afghan public sphere. The ideas of power and control in the public sphere in postcolonial spaces are different than the western conception of the public sphere, and the particular case of the Afghan public sphere is further complicated by the subaltern and marginalized position of the female citizens.

Chapter Three - Orientalism and Postcolonial Spaces

In the process of understanding the idea of postcolonial identity and publics, I examine the works of Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak. Said's (1978) *Orientalism* provides a view of the West's prevalent interpretations of the East, eastern cultures and Muslims, and how this affects identity in these nation states as well as the relationship between eastern and western communicative actors. Said's work also helps shed light on the political and cultural aspects of Middle Eastern Muslim states. By exploring the identity of the publics in these areas, I find further places of connection and separation from the idea of the western public sphere and what can be termed as an oriental, or more specifically, a Muslim public sphere.

Spivak's (1999) work focuses on postcolonialism. She cautions against oversimplifying the idea of the postcolonial subaltern ethos as simply oppressed; or labeling the cultural social groups of people a stereotyped homogenous whole. The social and cultural identities of different groups are essential in interacting with them. Giving due attention to these groups would facilitate discussion and rhetorical exchange in the postcolonial public sphere. Hauser's (1999) conception of studying vernacular discourse, along with the idea of recognizing difference among societal group identities within the postcolonial or subaltern ethos, is essential in establishing the concept of transnational discourse required for transnational public relations.

Both Said and Spivak pave the road to a genuine discourse between the West and East by cautioning against seeing the East as a cultural Other. They advocate introspection and self-criticism of preconceptions that might place the western identity as culturally superior and the eastern culture as inferior. Spivak's (1994) work with subaltern identity especially would provide the basis for interaction with people in culturally and religiously different nation states. In order to interact with the subaltern, it is important to listen to the subjects, and to interpret their ways of thinking and speaking in their own culturally defined ways (Dutta, 2011). This is important in transnational public relations as understanding the voices of marginalized groups in Afghanistan requires an understanding of the complications involved, and a way to deal with them.

In relation to the particular work of NGOs I focus on in chapter six, the work of Spivak also informs the understanding of the position of women as the subaltern. In Spivak's (1994) popular essay, "Can the subaltern speak?" Spivak critiques the purely western discourses about *sati* that describe the act. She raises the issue of silencing the voices of these women even further if the only attempt to provide a voice *for* them comes from accounts of British colonizers and Hindu leaders. Spivak's term 'epistemic violence', refers to the idea that subaltern women are not allowed to speak for themselves, but are always caught in translation, as the hegemonic colonialization of their culture marginalizes their ways of perceiving, understanding and knowing the world. The subaltern woman is then forced to speak in the language of her colonizer. Not making a space for the voices of women in Afghanistan poses a similar issue, where issues that are important to women in Afghanistan are absent from the public sphere. Gender as a constraint to admittance in the public sphere due to hegemonic power relations in patriarchal societies like Afghanistan addresses the feminist and gender perspectives of public relations. This is an understudied area in public relations (Aldoory, 2009) and the project

provides more work in the area of gender power relations and the representation of multiple voices in the public sphere.

Chapter Four - Public Relations in the Public Sphere

This chapter focuses on public relations as rhetorical interaction in the public sphere. Heath, Waymer and Palenchar (2013) examine the terms - democracy, rhetoric and public relations - in order to determine the relationship of these terms to each other. The authors examine the rhetorical heritage as something that gives rise to the idea of democracy so that the two seem inseparable. The public sphere offers a space for the blending of deliberative democracy and public relations so that interested organizations can work with publics in order to facilitate the emergence of differing voices. Taylor (2010) argues that civil society is a precondition for dialogic public relations.

In examining the notion of public relations in the civil society, Sommerfeldt (2013) states that the public sphere has been criticized "on the grounds of equal access and portrayed civil society as a guide for first-world imperialism" (p. 280). He argues that public relations, when used as tool to bring about the creation of social capital that facilitates access to the public sphere, can find its place in democracy. The work is helpful in understanding how public relations can be used to engage subaltern voices in order to make sure that they are also heard in a public space.

The work of Mohan Dutta takes the idea of public relations in the public sphere a step further and situates it in the postcolonial public sphere. His critique of public relations and civil society efforts focuses on the idea that by using the trope of civil society, public relations practitioners colonize the subaltern further instead of providing the subaltern with a voice (Dutta-Bergman, 2005). This argument is based on the observation that the subaltern exists outside of

what is termed as the civil society, which expects active engagement from citizens. By listening to the subaltern rather than considering them as passive receivers of public relations messages, the public relations practitioner can attend to the citizens who are marginalized (Dutta, 2011, Dutta & Dutta, 2013).

Situating public relations in the public sphere and inviting marginalized voices into dialogic engagement is a necessary part of this project as the public spaces for female voices in Afghanistan are limited or even nonexistent. In order to build a sense of social capital and engagement in the public sphere for these marginalized voices, the work of transnational public relations in these spaces would be of facilitating or making a space for the inclusion of women in the Afghan public sphere.

Chapter Five - The Theory and Practice of Transnational Public Relations

This chapter focuses on the notion of what transnational public relations would mean, especially when practiced in spaces inhabited by citizens in postcolonial nations or one that engages subaltern voices. Based on the previous chapters, some of the ideas that are inherent to the idea of transnational public relations in postcolonial nations would be - understanding the non-western public sphere and the involvement (or non-involvement) of actors in it, examining the identity of postcolonial or subaltern voices as communicative actors, and practicing public relations within a space that provides equal access to subaltern and marginalized voices.

One of the important coordinates in public relations is the place of the audience in the communicative act. An audience-centric approach in public relations has been advocated historically (Bernays, 2004) and its importance has only grown in the more recent integrated marketing communication (Schultz & Schultz, 2003) literature. In transnational public relations, an audience-centric approach becomes especially necessary as the communicative actors need to

understand each other across ideas of culture, nationality and religion. As mentioned earlier in the work of Spivak (1999), respect for the Other in the case of communicating with subaltern voices is an essential part of providing a space for communication to occur on an equal plane.

Following from the above, the idea of dialogic communication is also necessary, where communicative actors need to engage in dialogue in order to form an authentic relationship with each other (Buber, 1970). Dialogic cosmopolitanism's (Jordaan, 2009) four central themes, "a respect for difference; a commitment to dialogue; an open, hesitant and self-problematizing attitude on the part of the individual; and an undertaking to expand the boundaries of moral concern to the point of universal inclusion" are touchpoints in situating dialogue in a transnational space.

Practicing public relations communication in a postcolonial nation would also employ the necessity of situating the communication in the language and spaces that are culturally accepted. The immersion of western communicative actors and messages into the postcolonial or subaltern ethos is necessary. In order for the subaltern to truly express themselves, the ways of perceiving their world, their ways of thinking and knowing (Spivak, 1994) and being have to be engaged by the public relations practitioners.

Finally, navigating the issues of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1980) within a culture is important in transnational public relations in postcolonial spaces. It is important to recognize the leaders of influence (Bernays, 2004; Keller & Berry, 2003) who hold power and authority within a society. Recognizing the networks within these societies is crucial in order to start communicating with the influentials within these societies, and make your message heard in the places that matter. The personal influence model (Grunig, et. al., 1995) of public relations is

helpful in practicing public relations in postcolonial and collectivistic societies, where relationship-building is an important part of generating trust and influence.

Combining all these coordinates, there is an attempt to describe public relations praxis across transnational and postcolonial spaces. The specific research question being answered here is: How should PR practitioners approach public relations in transnational or postcolonial places? This chapter thus attempts to build a theoretical foundation for transnational public relations practices based on the study and application of good rhetorical practices, attention toward the cultural aspects of communicating with publics in other nations, application of the knowledge of postcolonial theory, and relations cultivation practices. Theory-building in the area of transnational public relations requires assessing and applying theories from related disciplines, and this chapter looks at rhetorical theory, the rhetorical model of public relations, postcolonial theory and the culture-centered approach, hermeneutic phenomenology and public relations theory to describe the theory and practice of transnational public relations in postcolonial spaces. This theory-building has a direct application to public relations being practiced by WISE in Afghanistan for the cause of providing a voice for disenfranchised women in the public sphere.

Chapter Six - Activist Transnational Public Relations - The Case of WISE in Afghanistan

Activist public relations are practiced by "activist organizations and groups [who] strategically use promotion to call attention to, frame, and advocate their issues, positions, and activities" (Smith and Ferguson, 2010, p. 397). Activist public relations are employed in order to rectify conditions identified by the activists and publics, and to maintain the movement or organizations that have been established to pursue such work. This project focuses on a nongovernmental organization that engages in activist public relations - Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality (WISE). The philosophy of the organization and the *imam*

training program conducted in Afghanistan is analyzed and discussed in order to exemplify an applied or praxis model of transnational public relations in a postcolonial nation.

In this chapter, the situation or context in which transnational communication is being carried out is examined through a brief sociopolitical history of Afghanistan. The situation is also studied through the notion of the Muslim public sphere and what that means for the communicative actors in this space. In Afghanistan, Islam is practiced by 99% of the Afghan population and is the basis of Afghan culture and values (Afghanistan, 2015). The dominant discourse within Afghan society is informed by an ideology of neopatriarchal countermodernity (Cole, 2003), as practiced by the Taliban regime. WISE attempts to create a space for discourse for marginalized women in this traditionally patriarchal society through their activist public relations efforts.

The organization being studied and its objectives are laid out in order to understand the positions from which it hopes to engage its audience as well as the messages it hopes to disseminate. The Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality (WISE), a global women-led social movement sponsored by the American Society for Muslim Advancement (ASMA), proclaims that it exists to, "build a cohesive, global movement of Muslim women that will reclaim women's rights in Islam, enabling them to make dignified choices and fully participate in creating just and flourishing societies." The *imam* training public relations campaign and the strategies used by the organization to publicize its message and carry out its activities is analyzed by studying the text of various reports and public relations material.

Conclusion

By situating the practice of public relations within the public sphere and tying it to the notions of dialogue and the importance of understanding the audience to be engaged, this project

seeks to provide a sense of a transnational public relations that is open and attentive to difference in postcolonial spaces. It seeks to engage subaltern voices within their own cultural and societal ways of engagements. The project provides a praxis model of transnational public relations in postcolonial spaces and an example of the same through the work of the activist organization WISE working in Afghanistan for enabling participation of women in the public sphere.

The themes running though the project are ones of cooperation, respect, justice, equity, sensitivity, and perception (Grunig, Toth & Hon, 2000) in public relations communication. Public relations representatives take into account the possibilities inherent in the given place and time in current Afghan society, and create the opportunities within this specific context for public relations strategies to be effective and appropriate to that moment and place (Brown, 2006). As such, their strategies are "tightly linked to considerations of audience (the most significant variable in a communicative context) and to decorum (the principle of apt speech)" (Howard, 2010, p.127).

As our society grows closer together through the use of technology and travel in a global village (McLuhan, 1962), it becomes necessary to explore the idea of a transnational public relations and how it can be employed to work with marginalized voices across the world. This project focuses on one such place and one such cause, but the idea of working across national, cultural and religious boundaries can be understood to apply to different issues and situations. The coordinates and communicative strategies described in this project could hopefully be applied to other transnational public relations efforts that could reach a variety of audiences around the world.

Chapter Two - The Public Sphere

> Neither education nor ingenuity nor talent can replace the constituent elements of the public realm, which make it the proper place for human excellence (Arendt, 1958, p. 49).

Introduction

The public sphere is the place where the communication of ideas and societal issues takes place between individuals, often addressing decision makers in positions of authority. It is a necessary space required for sociopolitical organization, as the citizenry can utilize this space to articulate their views in order to influence societal institutions (Castells, 2008) and effect social change.

Public relations, as an act of relationship-building and communication between organizations and their publics (What is Public Relations? 2016), takes place in the public sphere. It is a public communicative act intended to further communication about particular interests to and between publics and organizations. Activist public relation (Smith & Ferguson, 2010) practitioners call attention to the sociopolitical issues inherent within societies in order to advocate their issues and activities. Castells (2008) states that the public relations communicative materials of such organizations are built upon cultural materials, and these materials are either produced by organizations that intend to affect sociopolitical change, or are coproduced within the public sphere by individuals, interest groups, civic associations, and nongovernmental organizations. In understanding the function and place of public relations in society, it is necessary to first examine the public sphere as the place in which this activity occurs.

The constitution and expression of the public sphere varies with its context, its political and social history, and the use of technological mediums used to build communication networks to exchange information (Castells, 2008). The public sphere, as the place where the discourse of ideas and societal issues takes place between interested individuals, takes shape differently in different societies. It is especially different between liberal democracies of the west and postcolonial nations situated in the eastern part of the world (Harindranath, 2014). In examining a transnational notion of public relations, it becomes necessary to understand the formation of the public sphere in these different societies - both in how they are constituted as well as how they function in providing a space for ideas.

In this chapter, I will review Habermas' study of the rise and decline of the bourgeois public sphere as a starting point to look at various iterations and conceptions of the public sphere. This will be followed by Hauser's conception of the rhetorical and vernacular reticulate public sphere, understood as the idea of the public sphere that can bridge the gap between a modern and postmodern understanding of publics on one hand, and the western and eastern understandings of the public sphere on the other. Finally, I will look at various forms of the Muslim public sphere as it came into being in several places and times, under a variety of situations and regimes as a way to understand the configuration of a religious and wholly nonwestern public sphere.

The Formation of the Western Public Sphere - Habermas

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas (1991) provides an understanding of the bourgeois public sphere as it emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe as a result of economic, social, political and philosophical changes. Changes in the economic system and the growth of democracy fueled a change from the private household

to the public sphere, where people could freely meet and discuss issues of public concern. The public sphere as it emerged was a space where there was an opportunity for public deliberation necessary for an engaged citizenry.

Habermas' concept of the public sphere and its structural transformation is important to study as it can be considered the forerunner of the public sphere in the contemporary era. Habermas' work remains important as it provides the context for understanding democracy, political participation, and social and cultural life in contemporary society (Kellner, 2014). In his work, Habermas examined the participative democracy of the ancient Greek society, contrasting it with the rise of a bourgeois representative form of democracy in the late seventeenth century, to the current fall of a participative citizenry in the social welfare state.

Habermas (1991) traces the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere from a representative publicness in the medieval feudal state, where the lord represented the people publicly. The public and the private realm were not separate in the Middle Ages, unlike in the ancient Greco-Roman political system - where "the sphere of the *polis*, which was common (*koine*) to the free citizens, was strictly separated from the sphere of the *oikos*" (Habermas, 1991, p. 3). Economic and political changes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries led to the emergence of a space between the private and the political authority, where people met to discuss issues related to trade and commerce, and eventually the emergence of "rational-critical debate" (p. 51) about sociopolitical matters. The bourgeois public sphere as it emerged, was "a forum in which the private people, come together to form a public, readied themselves to compel public authority to legitimate itself before public opinion" (p. 25-26).

The bridge between the representative courtly form of publicity and the bourgeois public sphere were the "coffee houses, the salons, and the *Tischgesellschaften* (table societies)"

(Habermas, 1991, p. 30), where middle class intellectuals came together to engage in public debate. The public sphere of the salons and coffeehouses was elitist as it was primarily a space for the educated. Members of this public sphere were primarily concerned about intellectual and literary issues about art, philosophy and literary works. The literary and intellectual discourse born in these spaces, however, formed the basis of critical discourse necessary for the emergence of the public sphere as it moved beyond the coffee houses and formed the public sphere of a rational-critical debate concerned with political issues.

In Britain, the public sphere emerged as a way to check the decisions of the state. In this sense, it emerged as a representative democracy, where "the public character of parliamentary deliberations assured public opinion of its influence; it endured the connection between delegates and voters as parts of one and the same public" (Habermas, 1991, p. 83). The function of the public sphere was to assure that the legislative and judicial arms of the government carried out their functions in a way that "was practically necessary in the interest of all" (p. 83). This function was crystallized in the idea of public opinion. Kellner (2014) points out that this was the first time in history where like-minded individuals could come together to shape public opinion according to their needs and ideas, thereby influencing political practice.

The term 'public opinion', according to Habermas, had a rationality and secularized morality attached to it. It was not mere opinion in the sense of one's uncritical prejudice, but through Hobbes's and Locke's associating the word "conscience" with "opinion", became something that had the element of enlightened public criticism. It was the public's "direct, undistorted sense for what was right and just … through the public clash of arguments" (Habermas, 1991, p. 94). Discursive argumentation was employed in service of particular interests of the conversant and to further public good. Kellner (2014) notes that the public sphere

thus presupposed the freedom of speech and assembly, and the right to participate in political debate and decision-making.

Habermas (1991) references Kant, who saw the public sphere as a convergence of politics and morality, as it held the key to the freedom of people from unenlightened tutelage and allowed individuals to think for themselves. The act of thinking though, was to think aloud - to articulate thoughts along with the use of reason in the public sphere, because to think in an enlightened way could be achieved only through the use of reasoned public debate. However, Habermas has been criticized for presenting the bourgeois public sphere as a democratic forum for critical and rational debate, when as was presented later on in his work, certain groups were excluded from participation (Kellner, 2014). Habermas himself concedes that that he presents "a stylized picture of the liberal elements of the bourgeois public sphere" (1991, p. xix).

Therefore, the bourgeois public sphere was open to only property-owners being included in the reasoned public debate. Hegel and Marx's critique of the public sphere was based on these distinctions of class. Marx "denounced public opinion as a false consciousness" (Habermas, 1991, p. 124), as membership was based on bourgeois class interests and did not afford equality and opportunity to individuals who were not of a particular social class. The concern was of power and legitimacy being granted to some members of civil society and not others; therefore, members of a lower social class did not have equal access or opportunity for their voices to be heard in the public sphere. The counter model of the public sphere proposed by Marx came to be private persons free from economic functions who came to be part of the public.

The social critique and subsequent widening of the public sphere led to its weakening. While it included more space, it lost the initial function that the bourgeois public sphere had come together for - that of "subjecting the affairs that it had made public to the control of the

critical public" (Habermas, 1991, p. 140). Though it now was more inclusive, the public sphere no longer engaged in rational-critical debate. With the bleeding of the private into the public sphere, the publicness of the sphere was lost.

The next section in this work provides a social-structural transformation of the public sphere in the social welfare state with the rise of state capitalism, the culture industries, and the power wielded by corporations and big business in public life (Kellner, 2014). The shift was heralded by the changes brought about by the industrial revolution. The separation of work from the home or private sphere to the public had the result of the private sphere becoming a sphere of consumption, not of production. The state's intrusion into the private sphere also blurred the boundaries between the public and the private. These developments led to culture consumption and leisure through the intrusion of public media into homes. Instead of participating in the public sphere, individuals let the public sphere in through the use of media, leading to a shift from active debate to passive consumption. "The public sphere in the world of letters was replaced by the pseudo-public or sham-private world of culture consumption" (Habermas, 1991, p. 160). In other words, consumption of literary publications and the resultant critical deliberation was replaced by advertiser-financed publications focused on discussion of consumer items and their merits. In today's society, Kellner (2014) notes that big corporations, through the use of the media, have appropriated the public sphere and transformed it into a sphere of manipulative consumption and passivity on the part of individuals.

The publicity of the private in the form of "publicizing of private biographies" (Habermas, 1991, p. 171) and the rise of celebrity culture point to the blurring of the public and private spheres. Habermas concludes that media fueled publicity is not critical, but manipulative and promoting of consumptive activity in the service of a fully-industrialized society. He

critiques advertising and public relations as being beholden to corporatized private interests and targeting publics on their behalf. This, Habermas states, is the "refuedalization" of the public sphere as individuals are once again passive consumers rather than enlightened actors or critical rational beings. Like the common people looked upon the grandeur of the Lord and his "grand festivities" (Habermas, 1991, p. 10) in the middle ages, so did they now passively enjoy the diversions presented by media and the interests of the corporate world.

The function of deliberation in government has also been transmuted by media. While at one point, the public nature of deliberations of the governmental institutions was intended to ensure transparency into the working of these institutions, now it largely maintains a documentation function rather than one of deliberation or a demonstration of decision-making. Instead of serving to check the function of the state, media coverage and publicity now "serves the packaging of [governmental] proceedings for the mass culture of assembled consumers" (Habermas, 1991, p. 207).

The only way forward, as Habermas sees it, is for publics to organize themselves. In the mediatized public sphere, organizations strive for political compromises with the state and one another. The public sphere of private people dealing with each other is thus replaced by,

> a public of organized private people. *Only such a public could, under today's conditions, participate effectively in a process of public communication via the channels of the public spheres internal to parties and special-interest associations and on the basis of an affirmation of publicity as regards the negotiations of organizations with the state and with one another*. (Habermas, 1991, p. 232).

The disappearance of transparency, public deliberation and communication within and between organizations, both state and societal, is due to "the unresolved plurality of competing

interests" (Habermas, 1991, p. 234) - the hallmark of a postmodern society. Because of these competing interests, Habermas states, it is doubtful whether there can emerge a general interest that could constitute public opinion. He states that this "ineradicable antagonism of interests" could make the establishment of a rational-critical deliberative public sphere impossible. However, Habermas also holds on to the hope that the neutralization of social power (i.e., elite groups and specialized bureaucracy) and rationalization of political domination (where organizations are committed to transparency that can be checked by rational-critical debate) can move society toward an authentic public sphere. In a tentative proposal to revitalize the political public sphere, Habermas mentions setting "in motion a critical process of public communication through the very organizations that mediatize it" (1991, p. 232). In fact, in later works (1989) Habermas argues that the media are particularly important in constituting and maintaining a public sphere.

Habermas' conception of the public sphere has been criticized in a number of ways. In this work, I will focus in particular about the criticism that the bourgeois public sphere is not inclusive of the working class, plebian, and women in particular. Negt and Kluge (1993) criticized Habermas' notion of the public sphere for neglecting the proletariat and the plebian public spheres. Ryan (1992) states that overlooking women has also been one of the major issues with Habermas' ideal notion of the public sphere, especially during the time when women's voices were beginning to be included in political discourse.

Also missing from Habermas' early work, and important to this study, is the role of religion in society. Calhoun notes that Habermas not only neglects the role of religion in his seminal work on the structural transformation of the public sphere, but he also has "anti-religious assumptions" (1992, p. 36). However, in his later works, Habermas has attended to this omission

by stressing the importance of a postsecular stance that recognizes the importance of religion in public life, especially as it relates to ethical insights based on various religious traditions (Habermas, 2011). Habermas sees religious sources of meaning as helpful in combating the forces of global capitalism, while promoting ethical multicultural citizenship and respect (Habermas & Ratzinger, 2006).

Despite the criticisms directed at Habermas' work, his conception of the ideal rational-critical public sphere is important as it sheds light on the fact that ordinary citizens could participate in political discussion through individual and group debate in the public sphere, in effect providing a check for unjust authoritative government and affecting social change. The issue of rationality or reasoned debate is central to Habermas' conception of a public sphere, where "the state-governed public sphere [is] appropriated by the public of private people making use of their reason" (Habermas, 1991, p. 51). In the assessment of Habermas' notion of the public sphere as related to this work, Harindranath (2014) notes that the issues of equality, transparency, inclusivity and rationality become important metaphors.

While defining his initial question, Habermas states, "We call events and occasions ‘public’ when they are open to all, in contrast to closed or exclusive affairs" (1991, p.1). While conceptualizing the ideal public sphere in modern times, he notes the importance of transparency where the public should "set in motion a *critical* process of public communication through the very organizations that mediatize it" (p. 232). While Habermas' early work is not entirely inclusive as is shown in the critiques above (Negt & Kluge, 1993; Ryan, 1992) Marx and Hegel's social critique of the bourgeois public sphere points out this deficiency in Habermas' original work to some extent and gets the conversation about inclusivity started.

Another factor that is important to note is the prominence of organizations and media, and their effect on politics as well as public opinion in Habermas' conception of the transformed public sphere. In order for democratic social movements and societal change to take place, public opinion needs to be changed, and activist public relations (Smith & Ferguson, 2010) is particularly suited to achieve that change through advocacy and organizational outreach.

The public sphere, as Habermas formulated it has been transformed with the rise of new social movements, new technologies, and new spaces of public interaction. Castells (2008) writes that the current public sphere is certainly different in its expression than the ideal bourgeois public sphere around which Habermas formulated his theory. Kellner (2014) suggests that instead of conceiving of one liberal or democratic public sphere, it is more helpful to conceptualize a multiplicity of public spheres around a variety of interests important to disparate groups that constitute the public. Hauser's (1999) view of the public sphere as a plurality of publics is important in this regard as his conception not only provides the shift from a modern public sphere to a postmodern one, but also one that can provide the shift from Habermas' primarily western public sphere into one that can be considered a more transnational model, comprising a variety of eastern and non-democratic public spaces.

Postmodern Publics and Public Spheres - Hauser

Keane (1995) states that the public sphere is no longer bound to spatial frameworks; the structured and territorially-bound public spaces of the modern public sphere mediated by mass media as formulated by Habermas are no longer the norm. In its place, he says, we now have a multiplicity of spaces, which fragment what Habermas considered "a single, spatially-integrated public sphere within a nation-state framework" (p. 1). The conventional ideal of a unified public sphere and its corresponding idea of a united citizenry striving to bring into effect a public good,

are obsolete. The spaces we inhabit now are differently organized, into "a developing and complex mosaic of differently sized, overlapping and interconnected public spheres" (p.1).

Hauser's (1999) *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres* details the postmodern shift of the public sphere. Hauser posits that in a democratic society, public opinion should be paramount in decision-making for the good of the populace. However, he says, we have lost sight of what public opinion means as a result of the prevalence of surveys and polling data being used to determine public opinion. In the gathering of opinion polls, the rhetorical transactions of publics from diverse social worlds are lost, gathered into one homogenous whole which is not representative of the citizens and cultural agents in society.

In the twentieth century, Hauser states, public opinion is distrusted by the intellectuals and elites in society. Hauser writes that political elites "reveal a lack of conviction that wisdom will emerge from a public airing of substantive differences" (1999, p. 25). Lippmann's (1946) seminal work also points to the fruitlessness of guiding public policy through the opinion of an informed public, as he felt that the typical individual lacked the intelligence necessary to participate wisely in the procedures and policies required for governance. Lippmann's solution was an elite cadre of people who governed and acted as spokespeople for the general public.

Dewey (1927), similarly, credited technological advances and mass communication as being the culprits of an information glut that could confuse the public and keep individuals from understanding public policy decisions and their effects. Hauser (1999) states that western societies are complex and pluralistic in nature, with competing interests that might cause fragmentation within the public. In such a society, special interests organizations provide points of view to the public and can dominate public opinion. The general public, on the other hand, lacks the resources and interest to be self-aware on its own.

Organizations and their publics work towards shared ends, not on the basis of singular shared interests. For example, Hauser states, leftist feminist groups and right-leaning religious fundamentalist groups could be "joining hands when a public problem such as regulation of pornography meshes with their respective political agendas" (p. 31). Discourse is central to this model of different publics and different organizations reaching a shared end through the promotion of their individual and shared interests.

Publics are defined by Hauser as "the interdependent members of a society who hold different opinions about a mutual problem and who seek to influence its resolution through discourse" (1999, p. 32). A central idea regarding the discursive publics is that publics *emerge* from their deliberation around issues of interest to them. They are the products of the very discourse that happens with regard to particular issues.

In Hauser's critique of Habermas' bourgeois public sphere, he puts forth a number of concerns. First, he finds Habermas' model is elitist, as the bourgeois public sphere, with its emphasis on rationality, does not cater to publics whose concerns are not considered rational by the majority, or those publics who cannot communicate their concerns rationally. Issues of exclusiveness of the bourgeois public sphere stop it from including a variety of publics whose concerns are just as important, or might even be considered more important as they might constitute oppressed or misrepresented publics.

Another critique Hauser (1999) levels at the bourgeois public sphere speaks to its focus on a singular public domain, disregarding the complexity of the public sphere and the various discourses that might take place within it. Furthermore, its emphasis on rationality and objectiveness presupposes that publics are not emotionally invested in the ways that they can affect public policy issues. Hauser states that much of the discourse that takes places in the

public domain is much more emotionally charged and chaotic than the reasoned and analytical approach proposed by Habermas.

Another problem is the focus on universality that Habermas privileges. Hauser (1999) states that this emphasis neglects particular issues that constitute the majority of the problems various publics are concerned about. Concerns of smaller groups of publics are based on their particular interests and concerns, rather than the general or universal concerns of the populace as a whole.

Hauser (1999) departs from Habermas' modern conception of the public with its focus on consensus and amicability, to a postmodern notion of publics, with their diverse interests and agendas. In a postmodern society, says Hauser, we can reach an understanding with diverse interests, rather than hope for a consensus from all groups. Hauser's work is a departure from the Habermasian notion of the transformation and decline of the public sphere that conceives of the public sphere as a homogenous, rational, critical space populated by an ideal public. Instead, Cloud (2001) points out, "Hauser's publics are, by contrast, untidy, heteroglossic, sometimes irrational, and imperfect in their discursive execution" (p. 210).

Hauser defines the public sphere as "a discursive space in which individuals and groups associate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, where possible, to reach a common judgment about them. It is the locus of emergence for rhetorically salient meanings" (1999, p. 61). Rhetoric and discourse are central to such a public sphere. The rhetorical model of public spheres privileges reasonableness as the means through which fragmented publics can find identification with shared interests. Hauser conceptualizes it not just as a dialogue, but "a multilogue of voices along the range of individuals and groups engaged by a public question" (p. 62).

Hauser's conception of the public sphere shifts "the focus away from the political role of a unitary public sphere and toward the communicative and epistemological functions of a multiplicity of spheres" (1999, p. 81). In doing so, it focuses on rhetoric rather than analytical or rational debate in understanding a reticulate public sphere.

Hauser's rhetorical public sphere is characterized by the following norms:

1. It has permeable boundaries: Due to the multiplicity of publics and the networking and intertwining of these publics, individuals may belong to several groups, and may even participate in discussions of disparate groups. Individuals can move from one public to another, navigating the discursive space based on their rhetorical contribution.

2. It is active: Publics are comprised of intelligent, thinking individuals. In direct opposition to earlier conceptions of publics as passive and thoughtless, Hauser classifies publics as capable of intelligent thought and subsequent action.

3. It operates through contextualized language: The publics engage each other through the rhetorical norm of contextualized language to make their opinions intelligible to each other. The norms and values of groups and classes are reflected in the language used to discuss issues of significance.

4. It has a believable appearance: The publics are aware of the various social actors that choose to participate in the reticulate public sphere and the social actors appear in front of publics in a believable fashion.

5. It operates on tolerance: Since it is situated in a civil society characterized by a multiplicity of discourses and diversity of publics, the reticulate public sphere needs to be

> attentive to difference. Rather than consensus being the goal, Hauser's notion of the reticulate public sphere accommodates a wide range of opinions (p. 77-80).

The rhetorical model seeks to include both vernacular discourses as well as discourses by mass media communicators. By paying attention to a variety of discourses, it attempts to include "the dialogues among common people" (Hauser, 1999, p. 105) in addition to communication by institutional actors in places of power or authority. Hauser also determines that ways other than speech are also practiced by individuals in the public to affirm their opinion; consumer boycotts, letters to officials, symbolic acts and demonstrations, speeches, graffiti, votes and other forms of approval or disapproval can be read as a text. Therefore, discourse takes place not only as spoken or written words, but actions and demonstrations can also be construed as speech acts that determine public opinion.

Narrative is essential to the rhetorical model of the public sphere. By giving voice to individual stories and narratives, communicative actors in a society "evoke bonds of communal understanding and sympathy that can frame common commitments and motivate common actions" (Hauser, 1999, p. 112). However, the struggle of living in a postmodern moment is that there are no metanarratives that can lead to common and perfect understanding. Hauser points to this beautifully as the "paradox of inventing a public space in which to disagree" (p. 152). A space for disagreement can be built in a postmodern civil society, which can also be the key to a common reference world, rather than consensus between different points of view.

Publics are both shaped by and frame the discourse in the public sphere of which they are a part. Institutional actors are "defined and redefined" (Hauser, 1999, p. 234) by the discourse that takes place in the public sphere. Likewise, the meaning and structures of society change as the publics' opinion changes through vernacular rhetoric in Hauser's discursively constituted

world. Therefore, by becoming an active participant in the vernacular discourses taking place in the public spheres in a society, one can both monitor public opinion and introduce competing narratives to guide societal change.

Hauser's method of understanding the reticulate public sphere is to understand the communication praxis that takes place. "To learn what a public thinks, we first monitor the social conversation within a reticulate public sphere to ascertain who is speaking to whom about what" (Hauser, 1999, p. 279). Instead of bemoaning the lack of rational and objective discourse proposed by Habermas as the ideal, Hauser says that we must be attentive to the vernacular discourse already taking place within the reticulate public sphere. Rather than aspiring toward "the ideal form of discourse that seldom, if ever, has materialized" (p. 280) we should "[give] credence to discourse as it actually occurs in existing democracies and asking what these very social practices of formal and vernacular exchange may tell us about our public life" (p. 280). Through this we will be able to study the existent publics and counterpublics that emerge in the public sphere and the rhetorical processes through which they engage issues that are important to them.

Hauser's contribution to the conception of the public sphere is echoed by other scholars as well (Bitzer, 1978; Goodnight, 1982), who argue that the public sphere is a space where social knowledge is created. Hauser states that "the epistemic dimension of a democracy resides in public opinion" (2007, p.1). Public discourse occurs in the vernacular spaces that are separate from the voices of the elites or the media and it is the publics who create meanings for themselves, regardless of whether the leaders intend them to or not. Leaders, on the other hand, need to listen to these discourses and find ways to participate in them.

Hauser's conception of the public sphere is especially relevant to public relations, because it suggests that publics are intelligent and opinionated. This is in direct contrast to the Bernasian notion of publics that are thoughtless and can be easily manipulated. Basing their work on Hauser's ideas, public relations practitioners ought to find ways to listen and relate to their publics rather than seeking to control the communication. Focus ought to be on participation and interacting while relating to the publics. Such an approach to public relations is not only productive in today's postmodern society, but Troup (2009) argues that it is also the ethical approach.

Similarly, Hauser's conception of the operation of organizations and their publics is especially applicable to this project, as a transnational understanding of publics and public opinion is both accepting the publics as having a multiplicity of interests, and of multiple organizations working towards diverse ends that might have shared interests. His emphasis on rhetoric as the lens through which to evaluate the public sphere is significant as well, as it recognizes publics that are actively engaged in discursively making meaning in the public sphere. The rhetoricality of leaders or the media serves to activate the publics too, as the various publics can then exercise their understanding and judgment about issues that concern them.

However, a point of departure from both Habermas' ideal public sphere and Hauser's reticulate public sphere is necessary as both seem to be firmly situated in the western democratic world. Kellner (2014) points out that the concept of such public spheres assumes "a liberal and populist celebration of diversity, tolerance, debate, and consensus" (p. 24), characteristics not found in the majority of eastern societal and political frameworks. In conceptualizing a transnational understanding of communication within a public sphere, one needs to be attentive to the diverse nature of societies and their characteristics, ones that might be characterized by

uneven notions of power, status and equality. Nation states with authoritarian or autocratic regimes also have publics that must be understood as different than the western notion of the democratized publics. Such is the case with the Muslim public sphere, which has distinct characteristics separate from that of the public spheres conceptualized by Habermas and Hauser.

Muslim Public Spheres

The public sphere is not just limited to western societies. Eickelman & Salvatore (2002) observe that several anthropological studies have pointed to the elements of transaction and legitimacy that various collective societies in Africa and Asia have shown in order to influence political decision-making. However, the popularity of Habermas' initial work on the transformation of and decline of the public sphere has served to eclipse many other works focused in other societies. Habermas' (1992) later works, though, by understanding communicative action as rooted in the lifeworld and therefore generating shared notions of justice, widen the notion of the public sphere to take into account non-European and non-western societies.

Habermas also acknowledged the role of religion in the public sphere in his later works (Habermas, 2001; Habermas & Ratzinger, 2006). He realized the continuing importance of religion in public life and sought to translate the ethical insights of religious traditions into a philosophical perspective that could combat global capitalism. By acknowledging the vitality of religion in the public sphere and its effects on public opinion, Habermas acknowledged that we can no longer conceptualize only an ideal public sphere, but one that owed its form and structure to a variety of different forces.

Perhaps it is helpful to look at Dewey's (1927) understanding of the public as one having recognized common goals and a sense of leadership. Dewey also places emphasis on institutional

actors as intermediaries through which the public can be organized and its intent known. The public, according to Dewey, can be formed through different practices, habits and responses to situations based on overlapping interests.

Contributors to the volume *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies* argue that "the traditional Muslim society had diverse and changing varieties of public spheres" (2002, p.1). One of the initial problems scholars had in conceptualizing the public sphere in Muslim societies was seeing Muslim society as a single, homogenous society (Gellner, 1994) where the religious orientation of the leadership and the public served to impose constraints on the thought and actions of those within it. Eickelman (2002) points the error of such a narrow view and posits that Muslim societies should be considered in the plural and diverse ways in which they are found in the world. Eisenstadt and Schluchter (1998) argue that culture, societies and civilization in premodern and modern Muslim societies are formed through the existing culture of societies and their contestation to new, external modes of thinking.

Hurvitz (2002) explores a key incident in the Muslim public sphere in the ninth century - that of the inquisition or *minha*. In an authoritarian imposition of doctrine by the Abbasid Caliphate built around the created rather than delivered view of the Quran, religious and political leaders used state violence and torture to impose a particular view on individuals. The resistance offered by the populace pointed to discursive social action that was undertaken by members of the religious public sphere in early Muslim societies, who came together to formulate informal consensus and social community. The *minha* tried and failed to destroy the shared commonplace understandings within the particular religious public sphere. Eickelman (2002) states that similar iterations of the discursive public sphere based on shared community and religious learning have been pointed out in Cairo and Damascus in the medieval age by various scholars.

A study of Baghdad under the Seljuk dynasty in the eleventh century demonstrates the inclusion of institutional actors in the public sphere. Ephrat (2002) studies a religious public sphere in which a diversity of communities like various Sufi orders, *khanqahs*, *madrasas* and *madhabs* participated amidst the intertwining of religious, political and social life in the public sphere. Similarly, Talmon-Heller (2002) discusses a religious public sphere in Syria under the Zangid and Ayyubid dynasties during the tenth and eleventh centuries. Both the Baghdad and Syrian religious public spheres mentioned above were characterized by an informal network for creating a religious public sphere; the institutional actors within them were not state-sanctioned and neither were they a formal, chartered group.

Gerber's (2002) study of the Ottoman public sphere is particularly important to this project as he examines the influence of religious leaders in interpreting divine law or *shari'a* to the masses. He studies the importance of *qadis* or the judiciary in enforcing a local moral order. Though legitimized by the central ruling authority, these *qadis* worked in a manner that was free from the control of the central government. A parallel of the role of the *qadi* as it was imposed in the public sphere and civil society in the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries can be seen in modern Libya in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Layish, 2002). Layish's discussion of the role of *qadis* proposes that the authority and legitimacy granted to them, and the way that they mediate between the state and the people, is an important element in creating a public sphere especially in tribal Muslim societies. The *qadis* in these societies work autonomously in the public sphere, and thus are legitimized by the general public as they are distinct from the official working of the state.

Levtzion (2002) continues the exploration of leadership in the Muslim public sphere by studying the role of Sufi shaykhs and shari'a scholars in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The

leadership of these opinion leaders in the public sphere has been shown to be more powerful than the prevailing beliefs held by the elite in the Ottoman Empire, and thereby serves to check the decision-making of the ruling class. Levtzion's account demonstrates a religious public sphere where the leadership serves to unite the publics under a common articulation of religious and social norms. He also traces the movement of the Sufi leadership to more formal organizations in the eighteenth century that worked toward social and political change in the public sphere.

A most important facet of the Sufi leadership was the fact that the opinion leaders used the vernacular languages of the region to reach out to followers and the general public. Their influence was immense in the hearts and minds of the general populace, as it mediated not only between the state and the individual in a political manner, but also interpreted the spiritual and divine presence to the public as a form of religious mediation. They were both politically and religiously legitimized by the public. A parallel to the Sufi leadership can be found in the leadership of the *imams* in the contemporary Afghan public sphere described in the sixth chapter of this work.

As the discussion above has shown, there is evidence for the existence of a public sphere in premodern Muslim societies even though not enough attention was paid to it in scholarship regarding the idea of the public sphere and its transformation. Moreover, the structure or function of the public sphere in these societies was not the same across national and cultural boundaries - diverse forms of the public sphere appeared in societies that had different understandings of leadership, publics, legitimation and participation of communicative actors. Eickleman (2002) states that due to the boundary between the public and the private being blurred in Muslim societies, the formulation of the public sphere in these societies was indicative of religious concerns as well as political ones - a key difference from the western idea of the public sphere.

Hoexter and Levtzion (2002) mention that the case studies presented in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies* are not indicative of all Muslim cultures or of all periods, but they examine institutions and institutional actors that were central to the formation and evolution of the public sphere in most Muslim societies. The importance of Islam, not as a religion, but as a regulator of social order and a symbol of cultural identity is of importance in the institution of the religious public sphere in these societies. The common public, by its participation in the public sphere, was instrumental in changing or shaping key social and normative religious practices as well, as presented by Talmon-Heller (2002) in her chapter on the public sphere in Damascus, where people introduced saint worship and visitation of tombs into religious practice. Public opinion in these societies transformed not only the norms of the society but also of religion as it was practiced in the everyday lives of its members.

Hoexter (2002) points to the importance of the *umma,* or the community of believers, as being the utmost authority in sanctioning the legitimacy of the political rulers, who in turn legitimized the religious authorities in society. So, in effect, the community of believers, as the public, was the most important group in the public sphere. The *umma* exercised their influence in the public sphere in a number of ways and through a variety of social and religious institutions. Membership in professional guilds and neighborhood organizations promoted group identification and provided a way to influence opinion in the public sphere (Hoexter and Levtzion, 2002).

The picture that emerges of the public sphere in various premodern Muslim societies is thus that of a vibrant and diverse sphere in which different social actors participated under various understandings of leadership and followership, and the *umma* or the community of believers "was the center of gravity" (Hoexter & Levitzion, 2002, p. 15) around which the public

sphere revolved. However, Anderson (2003) states that the public lost this central position as various militants and activists have challenged practices and authorities who speak for Islam, and have constituted new laws, social practices and political agendas in modern Muslim societies.

Anderson (2003) argues that the public sphere in Muslim societies has been a contested space for at least a generation. Eickelman and Salvatore (2002) point to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and its rise in the 1920s as one example of the mass political movements that took place in Muslim societies around the world. More recently, other organizations like Lebanon's Hizbullah and Palestine's Hamas, and the Israeli Shas as a non-Muslim comparative, have also arisen as examples of religious-based organizations that serve to shape moral understanding and social action in the public sphere. These organizations, in presenting an alternate view of religious and social action, have introduced competing ideologies into the public sphere.

The Taliban's fundamentalist imposition of radical Islam in modern Afghan society challenged the reasoned aspect of a public sphere itself, and coded women especially as private, excluding them from the public sphere. Cole (2003) states that the use of mass spectacle through mediated technology imposed authoritarian rule, patriarchal societal norms and radical religious rule on the public. The use of modern media and techniques by the Taliban have served to subvert the public sphere in Afghanistan, coding any and all actors other than those legitimized by the Taliban as private (Cole, 2003).

Forms of resistance to the state have also been introduced into eastern public spheres. For example, Iranian youth have begun to participate in what they call a "post-Islamic public space" (Eickelman and Salvatore, 2002, p. 105) in which they challenge state-directed norms of religious activity. Modern Muslim societies have thus begun opening the public sphere to new and diverse societal actors and discursive practices challenging the hegemonic authority of

fundamentalist voices, while promoting new habits of production and discourse within the public sphere (Anderson, 2003).

The use of new forms of media and technology has transformed the Muslim public sphere into one in which there has been an explosion of contested ideologies and voices. Use of books, audiocassettes, pamphlets, and more recently the radio and television (Anderson, 2003; Eickelman and Salvatore, 2002) are central to the modern public sphere of Islam. These media blur the lines between the public and private spheres as determined by Habermas (1991) in his understanding of the decline of the western-European public sphere. Media and technology served to demarcate the private sphere as the sphere pf consumption of these public mediated discourses. Instead of engaging in the public sphere, publics merely consumed information.

On the other hand, Eickleman and Salvatore point out the use of mediated technology by Muslim individuals engaged in the public sphere to support projects for the public good, using it to teach and learn as well as furthering alternative ways of thinking of Islamic political action. They argue that a 'modern' public (in the sense of Dewey's public) did not emerge into being in the Muslim public sphere, but was rather reconstituted by the changes in technology and contesting political and religious authority. These changes oblige even the most authoritarian of regimes to justify their actions.

Eickelman and Salvatore (2003) also point to the fact that advances in communicative systems make transnational communication possible, and institutional actors can operate quickly and independently across boundaries of nation-states in order to consolidate publics around particular interests concerning the public good. Indeed, Mandaville (2003) maintains that a wider Muslim sphere is emerging due to translocal forces such as diasporic societies, transnational social movements and informational technologies where individuals are discussing and debating

issues such as Muslim identity, community and the emergence of a 'critical Islam.' A transnational understanding of the public sphere will be discussed more fully in the fifth chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the notion of the public sphere, and its structure and functions as it is manifested in various places, as the space in which the performance of public relations takes place. The public sphere is understood as a space between the private and the official spheres, where public opinion is formed and articulated.

I started by looking at the Habermasian (1991) notion of the public sphere since his work is generally considered a standard for understanding the idea of the transformation and decline of the public sphere. In *The structural transformation of the public sphere*, Habermas outlines an ideal rational-critical, engaged public that performs the act of legitimizing political action on the part of the nation state. However, the ideal public sphere of Habermas has declined to a state where the public is manipulated by self-interested institutions through the use of media. The power to mold public opinion has been seized by a small elite group, who control the news and media in the modern capitalist society, and perceive the general public as mere consumers of information rather than an engaged and active group. In further writings, Habermas has attempted to further his understanding of the contemporary public sphere, most notably including the role of religion in public life.

An alternate conception of the public sphere is furthered by Hauser (1999) in his book *Vernacular voices*. Hauser's work points to a postmodern idea of a multiplicity of publics rather than a single public sphere. His conception of the reticulate public sphere is where publics come together to develop and express public opinion through engaging in vernacular discourse. Hauser's work is important in providing a bridge between Habermas' exclusively western or

European understanding of the public sphere in liberal democratic societies, and the public sphere than can be found in non-western Muslim societies.

The structure and function of the public sphere in Muslim societies is diverse in its conception and transformation across various places and ages. In the volume *The public sphere and Muslim societies*, contributors trace various forms of the public sphere in premodern Muslim societies. Islam is central to the public sphere in Muslim societies, not as a religion but as a tradition of moral understandings of social action that can inform societal actors as well as individuals' lives in the private sphere. The formulation of religious practices has historically been directly influenced by the *umma* in the public sphere in Muslim societies.

However, more recent versions of the Muslim public sphere have seen a diversity of ideologies and political movements take root within them. Power and culture play an important role in the modern conception of the Muslim public sphere, especially as seen in some authoritarian or fundamentalist regimes. In opposition to these, the postmodern Muslim public sphere in other nation states, aided by the advances in media and technology, seems inclusive of a plurality of publics and voices in the public sphere, even performing a more transnational function of communication across national and cultural boundaries to access conversations that can formulate a larger, more engaged *umma*.

Chapter Three - Orientalism and Postcolonial Spaces

> Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings (Said, 1994, p. 7).

Introduction

Due to the movement of the public sphere from a physical space to a virtual space, and various factors like globalization and the flattening of the world (Friedman, 2005; McLuhan, 1962) the need for transnational communication within and between public spheres has arisen. As pointed out by Eickleman and Salvatore (2003), the advances in technology in the recent past have enabled Muslim actors in the public sphere to communicate across national boundaries. According to Mandaville (2003), a wider Muslim public sphere is tackling issues such as Muslim identity, the Muslim community and critiques of Islam. While these transnational public spheres provide the opportunity for people from different parts of the world to come together to communicate about issues of common concern, they also present a coming together of communicative actors having different cultural backgrounds and worldviews.

As seen in the previous chapter, the publics in eastern or traditionally Muslim societies are markedly different from publics in liberal western democracies. Differences in political, social and cultural lifestyles present particular challenges where ideologies differ. Communicating transnationally, especially with regions that are far apart geographically, brings with it a particular set of expectations about the Other, or as Said (1978) puts it, a lens through

which we define one another. In this chapter, I examine two of these ways of seeing, Orientalism and Postcolonialism, as pitfalls to be avoided in navigating through the spaces of transnational communication when communicating with the cultural Other.

This chapter will first look at Edward Said's work regarding Orientalism, where issues of identity and culture of Muslim societies in relation to Western understandings of the Orient will be examined. Said argues that by seeing Islam and the Orient through the eyes of the Western interpreter, the voice and identity of the Muslim subject is lost. Spivak continues this discussion when she states that the identity of the postcolonial subaltern is erased when the colonizer attempts to speak for her. Both Said and Spivak deal with issues of representation and tackle issues of speech acts within hegemonic discourse structures. Finally, postcolonial feminism will briefly be examined as a way to enter the conversation while being attentive to the historical and cultural contexts of the public sphere in Afghanistan.

Orientalism - Said

Said defines Orientalism as "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience" (1978, p. 1). He describes Orientalism as a discourse that seeks to ideologically and culturally define the Orient. Orientalism is a discursive representation of the Orient, a way of Western scholars and speakers to define the East in their own fantastical ways.

The East and the West are both defined through Orientalism, as Said states that Orientalism is "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident"" (p. 2). Hence the Orient can only be understood when put into stark relief by contrasting it with the Occident. And conversely, "the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea,

personality, experience" (1978, pp. 1-2). That is, the East and West are both divided and defined by the differences between them.

This discursive definition of the Orient is indicative of European cultural hegemony, as the Orient is defined by the Occident through "making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it" (1978, p.3) from a position of power. Said states that Orientalism is thus "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (p.3) and "because of Orientalism, the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action" (p. 3).

Said references British Member of Parliament, Balfour's speech to show that the West's understanding of their relationship toward the Orient was mediated by a Foucauldian understanding of knowledge and power. Though Said states that the relationship between the West and the East has been forged throughout the ages since the time of Homer, the mid-eighteenth century was instrumental in defining Orientalism. Through the "growing systematic knowledge" (1978, p. 39) Europe (mainly the British and French) had of the Orient, and "Europe's position of strength, not to say domination" (p. 40), the relationship between the East and the West grew to be formed into an imperialist and culturally hegemonic effort to define the Orient. It is their systematic knowledge that gives Europeans the power to colonize and speak for the Orient.

Balfour argues that colonial occupation is a moral duty to do good for the politically disadvantaged and morally inferior Egyptians - the colonized. In his speech, says Said, Balfour speaks for the Egyptians, because he "knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves" (1978, p. 35). The West is therefore positioned intellectually and morally superior to the Orient. Dabashi (2015), in his polemic book *Can Non-Europeans*

Think, goes a step further when he argues that in todays' world, intellectuals who speak from outside of the European pedigree are marginalized, patronized and misrepresented, which has the effect of negating their voice and reducing their speech to something that doesn't fit within preconceived notions of what ought to be. The colonial regime of knowledge production and power continues.

Said also quotes Lord Cromer, England's representative in Egypt, who was instrumental in defining Egypt, according to Balfour. Cromer's view of the Orientals were that they were "almost everywhere nearly the same" (1978, p. 38) wherever they were geographically. Cromer believed that Orientals everywhere had a Platonic essence, which any ruler of Orientals could examine, study, understand and use to his benefit. The Orient was reduced to a homogenous entity, with people from widely differing geographical regions reduced to stereotypes of the Oriental.

In defining the Oriental, it was believed that the Oriental "acts, speaks and thinks in a manner exactly opposite to the European" (p. 39). The relationship between the European and the Oriental is thus of polar opposites, where the European stood for "rational, virtuous, mature and normal" whereas the Oriental was "irrational, depraved, childlike and different" (p. 40). If there is any intelligibility or identity in the Orient's world, it is because of its relationship to the European world - the Orient is therefore created by the Occident.

While being an ideology that penalizes the Orient for not being Europe, Orientalism also constrains and limits the Orient through the truths the Occident believes to be true about it. "Truth, in short, becomes a function of learned judgement, not of the material itself" (1978, p.67) says Said. Additionally, the notion of the orient, the Arab or Islam is fixed in time by the Western speaker, not allowing it to redefine itself with its changing relationship with the

historical moment (Said, 1985). According to Arnett and Holba (2012), philosophical hermeneutics unites three coordinates - the interpreter, the text, and the historical moment - in dialogue. But by barring the historical moment to have any effect on the text, and disallowing particular interpretive voices as well, the process of Orientalism proves to be destructive not only to the Orient but also to the Occident as both the East and West operate on false knowledge structures about the Other, and themselves.

About 20th century Orientalism, Said states that the imperialistic attitudes and stereotypes produced earlier were still in function. In post-World War II America, Said points out that the "attitudes of cultural hostility" (p. 290) and Arab stereotyping were continued. In his later works, Said (2003) talks about the American "War on Terror" and the effect it had on geopolitical knowledge production. Using the same tools of hegemonic use of language and power, the discourse about "us" vs. "them" was still a source of concern.

Said's discourse on the West's perception of Islam is enlightening as well, and carrying on in the same vein, he determines that Islam was understood by the West not as a religion in itself, but a representation of itself to the medieval Christian. The West's understanding of Islam was an analogical one, where it was contrasted with the tenets and beliefs of Christianity to find its shape with Western thinkers. There was a great reluctance on the Occident's part "to neglect what the Qur'an meant, or what Muslims thought it meant, or what Muslims thought or did in any circumstances" (1978, p. 60), but only an effort to reconstruct the religion in the image of Christianity, by contrasting it with what Christianity was not, and finding Islam a poor imitation or "a misguided version of Christianity" (p. 61). Similarly, Mohammed becomes an imposter, and "the epitome of lechery, debauchery, sodomy, and a whole battery of assorted treacheries"

(p. 62) that reduces the historical person into an image or theatrical representation that can be reviled.

The problem the West faced with Islam was that it was geographically closer being centered in the Near East, and was culturally also similar to Christianity and Judaism's roots. It had some early military and political success after its conception, spreading to the Arab, Ottoman, North African and Spanish regions. From the end of the seventh century to 1571, the battle of Lepanto, "Islam was militant hostility to European Christianity" (1978, p. 91). To overcome the threat that Islam presented, the West had to be known, possessed and re-created by the use of language and power. To this day, Orientalism seems to be in the service of alerting "Western consumers to the threat of an enraged, congenitally undemocratic, and violent Islamic world" (p. 342).

Said (1978) points out that stereotypes of the Arab or the Muslim have been propagated in this postmodern world by the rise of technological mediums and their forcing of information into standardized molds. Early on in *Orientalism*, he cites three things that have contributed to the stereotyping of Muslims: one, the anti-Arab and anti-Islamic prejudice in the West; two, the simplification of the political struggle between the Palestinian Arabs and the Israeli Jews; and third, the inability to either identify with or to dispassionately discuss Islam or Arabs. In the afterword, he points out that after the political and ideological conflicts that emerged in the 1980s and 90s throughout the world, Islam has been reported as "a topic of alarmed, if not always precise and informed, journalism and scholarship" (p. 334). This has had the effect of creating an 'us' vs. 'them' mentality in the minds of both Westerners and Easterners.

In the final chapters, Said points out that Orientalism is now prevalent both in the Western world as well as in the Orient. The establishment of departments of Orientalism and

Oriental Studies in Western universities spreads the Orientalist ideology. Moreover, education in the Orient follows Western models, and increasing number of Arab students travel to Western universities, which also has the effect of propagandizing Orientalism. Said also targets consumerism as the culprit in catching the Orient up in the Western market, with the result that "the modern Orient, in short, participates in its own Orientalizing" (p. 325). By seeing himself through the eyes of the (perceived) superior Westerner, the Arab tries to modernize himself, because the concepts of modernization, progress and Western culture are legitimized by the West - a thought echoed by Fanon's (2008) concept of the colonized wearing white masks over their black skins to legitimize themselves.

One of the tropes that is important to this project is the role played by Western 'saviors' in Orientalism. Through a variety of narratives and source material, Said shows that the European's relationship to the Orient was one of a savior "of vision and genius, heroes in Carlyle's sense" (p. 95). Colonization then was about safeguarding the interests of the Orient, which the Oriental subject could not do for himself. The overarching narrative was of Europe teaching the Orient about liberty, a concept that Orientals, and especially Muslims, knew nothing about. Said quotes Chateaubriand's writing: "Of liberty, they know nothing; of propriety, they have none; force is their God" (p. 172). Colonial conquest is therefore coded as liberation of the Orientals from themselves, and the Western conqueror as an ideological superior who offers redemption to the degenerate Oriental.

In relation to the perception of Muslims and Islam, Said references Bernard Lewis' work *Revolution in the Middle East and Other Case Studies*, where Lewis argues about the inability of Arabs to conduct a revolution as opposed to military coups. And thus the Western military, in the role of the savior, is duty-bound to liberate them. Interestingly, Dabashi's (2012) contention

about the Arab Spring being a sort of delayed defiance to the centuries of tyranny of colonialism and orientalism serves as a counterpoint to Lewis' thesis.

Critics of Said's work have pointed out that in appropriating the term Orientalism, which can be used for a variety of Oriental studies and literature, Said has 'perverted' (Winder, 1981, p. 617) it to mean the same as Islamic racism or imperialism in the absolute sense. Winder also points out that in not looking at the entirety of Oriental scholars (both Western and Eastern as well as male and female), Said picks and chooses his texts to drive his points home, and in doing so orientalizes Orientalists, i.e., reduces them to a homogenous group of prejudiced Western imperialist speakers.

Nevertheless, as one of the foundational texts of postcolonialism, Said's *Orientalism* shows how power and dominance through the use of language and knowledge production can be achieved and sustained, in effect silencing the Other from speaking. What is central to the present project is how Said considers "questions as to how the production of knowledge best serves communal, as opposed to factional, ends, how knowledge that is non-dominative and non-coercive can be produced in a setting that is deeply inscribed with the politics, the considerations, the positions, and the strategies of power" (Said, 1985, p. 91). Like Said, this work is concerned with transcending "negative Otherness by a broader moral vision of the common culture of humanity" (Turner, 2004, p. 173).

In addition, Said was also concerned with transcending man-made notions of the Other through the critique of borders (1994); he says that the task of the intellectual or scholar is to transcend physical, national, cultural and spiritual barriers. In studying activist public relations in transnational communication, Said's work informs us of the ability to explore human suffering across borders, and examine ways to procure social justice for oppressed peoples in a way that

looks at international norms of morality and human rights (Said, 1993). What Said advocates is an intellectual responsibility toward other cultures, which Turner (2004) interprets as a defense of cosmopolitanism where intellectuals can reject all claims to cultural superiority and dominance. Said sates that there is a difference between knowledge of other peoples and other times that is the result of understanding, compassion, careful study and analysis for their own sakes, and on the other hand knowledge that is part of an overall campaign of self-affirmation (2003, para. 6).

This thread is carried forward by Gayatri Spivak's work, where she questions the ability of the subaltern to voice their own narratives. In understanding the subaltern, one needs to exercise caution, as there is the danger of oversimplifying the postcolonial subaltern ethos as simply oppressed and thinking of them as a homogenous group of people, whereas in reality the social and cultural identities of different groups are varied and particular to their religious, social, geographical and cultural worlds.

Postcolonial Spaces - Spivak

Postcolonialism refers to the intellectual tradition of studying the legacies of colonialism and imperialism. While Said's work on Orientalism is considered a foundational text in postcolonial literature, postcolonialism is broader in scope than Said's Orientalism. Spivak's work, as critical theory within the discipline of postcolonialism, seeks to understand the ideology of political, social and economic neocolonialism as ways of viewing the self and the Other. Spivak also looks particularly to issues of representational speech, which has the effect of erasing the identity of the subaltern.

In her seminal essay *Can the subaltern speak?* Gayatri Spivak charges postcolonial studies with reinforcing neocolonial domination through political, economic and cultural

coopting of the subaltern. In this way, she states, postcolonialism is an imperialist discourse that comes from a space of privilege. In other words, postcolonial critics, who come from a place of First World, male, privileged, upper class, academic environment end up participating in and producing discourses that colonize and dominate the subaltern rather than dismantling colonial and imperialist notions. In their attempt to study and classify the subaltern, postcolonial critics homogenize their identity and attempt to ascribe the critics' own understandings on the lived experience of the subaltern. Speakers who speak from a place of privilege erase the subaltern as they impose knowledge from above rather than responding to the historical and ideological factors that are complicit in silencing the subaltern. What is required, according to Spivak, is the de-centering of the postcolonial critic, which would then lay emphasis on the possibilities of listening to and providing possibilities of speech to the subaltern.

Spivak critiques Ranajit Guha's project to provide a voice to the subaltern, saying that any attempt from outside to provide a collective identity and voice to the subaltern is a disservice as it first wrongfully understands the subaltern and a homogenous group of people, and second, attempts to speak for the subaltern rather than allowing them to speak for themselves.

Representation of the subaltern "…is disclosed through the concrete experience of the intellectual, the one who diagnoses the episteme" (p. 69) and according to Spivak, this constitutes epistemic violence, where the intellectual constitutes the colonial subject as the Other, and by doing so, erases him. Spivak references Foucault in defining her use of the term epistemic violence, where she takes it to mean "a complete overhaul of the episteme" (p. 76) of the subaltern. Spivak critiques the narrative of imperialism becoming the normative one by which all of the emerging discourses are interpreted.

The issue with representing the oppressed is that they, being a multiplicity, cannot be represented by the intellectual. Thinking of the subaltern as a homogenous collectivity by intellectuals is problematic. In doing the representation, the intellectual presents himself as transparent. Representation itself presents issues of class conflict and power, says Spivak. In representing the oppressed, the representer assumes power and control over them.

Spivak pronounces that "the postcolonial intellectuals learn that their privilege is their loss" (p. 82). By this she means that entering a conversation from a place of privilege insulates one from gaining different kinds of knowledge. The limitations of privilege should be understood and strained to be overcome in order for the individual to be open to increasing their knowledge. Critically examining one's ideas, beliefs, prejudices and assumptions leads to understanding how they came to be, and then, to discard them. And finally, Spivak states that "intellectuals must attempt to disclose and know the discourse of society's Other" (1994, p. 66).

In unlearning one's privileges and assumptions, Spivak's work is firmly grounded in Marx and his critique of class. She says that she thinks in terms of ethics, or unlearning Western ethics and "the possibility of imagining an ethical subject outside of the monotheistic Judeo-Christian arena" (Danius, Jonsson & Spivak, 1993, p. 30). She is opposed to someone from above speaking from the space of privilege and bias, who cannot understand the lived experience of the subaltern. Her critique looks specifically at who is speaking, and from what position, to help the subaltern voices be heard. While rejecting Western Judeo-Christian ethical positions, she points to the gendered internationality of Islam as a possible space of imagining the ethical subject. In other words, to think of other ethical systems, one could keep aside their assumptions and imagine themselves in the spaces of the subjects who they're trying to listen to and understand. It

is important to interpret the ways of thinking and speaking of the subaltern without any cultural or historical assumptions, prejudices or biases.

The thrust of Spivak's argument in *Can the subaltern speak?* is that the subaltern is silenced not because she cannot speak, it is because she cannot be heard or understood outside of the normative dominant (read patriarchal) language structures. The attempt at self-representation is stymied not by the inability to speak, but the inability of the listener to hear and understand the discourse of the subaltern that lies outside of the accepted modes of expression. Spivak honors the dialogic understanding of speaking when she asks, 'Can the subaltern speak?'

The solution, then, doesn't lie in "the positivist inclusion of a monolithic collectivity of 'women' in the list of the oppressed whose unfractured subjectivity allows them to speak for themselves against an equally monolithic 'same system'" (1994, p. 73), but to work against the systemic and normative subalternity and de-hegemonizing of normative discourses. The task of responsibility and attentive listening in Spivak's work is primarily an ethical endeavor of making space for the Other to exist. Spivak doesn't see this as an act of benevolence, but of an equal responsibility and accountability on both sides to respond to the Other (Landry & MacLean, 1996).

Coming to the subjective performance of agency and identity, Spivak states, "to the question of woman as subaltern, I will suggest that the possibility of collectivity itself is persistently foreclosed through the manipulation of female agency" (p. 78). The female subaltern is not afforded any identity or agency due to patriarchal knowledge constructions. She comes into focus only as she is represented by the elite male gaze. In order to be heard, the female subaltern needs to elevate herself to a position of privilege and to make space for herself within

existing discursive structures. Her identity needs to be sketched in relation to those who are already positioned within the discourses as having the means to represent themselves.

However in achieving self-representation and the privileged position of speech within symbolic structures of knowledge and power, the subaltern ceases to be the subaltern, as by Spivak's definition, the subaltern is one who does not have the means to enter the domains of privileged knowledge construction. Therefore, to her own question of whether the subaltern can speak, Spivak's answer would be a resounding no. However, various feminist theorizing and perspectives can look toward listening to the voices of the marginalized in postcolonial countries.

Feminist Perspectives

The female subject needs to examine the plurality of female experiences within her culture and traditions and critically reevaluate historical discursive and systematic cultural and religious mandates that might not be applicable to her position in the present. Buzzanell (1994) states that feminist perspectives allow us to recreate gender relations socially, historically and culturally. Studying the way men and women maintain gender relations and enact gendered roles in society lead us to examine the viewpoints of women who have traditionally been rendered subordinate or invisible in society. Buzzanell (1994) states that feminist theorizing can help us look more closely at core feminist issues like women's oppression, trivialization of their ways of thinking and being, coding women as less than or second class citizens, and the ability of women to be their own agent of change against oppression and marginalization. While an examination of the wide range of feminist theories is beyond the scope of this project, I will reference "postmodern feminism" as a way to enter the conversation of how feminist theory can help understand the lived experience of women as a bridge to discussing postcolonial feminism and Islamic feminism.

According to Buzzanell (1994), postmodern feminism seeks to reframe the Other. Rather than viewing the Other as someone who is subordinate or inferior, it aims to present the Other in a positive analytic stance from where there can be a disruption of dominant patriarchal discourses in society that try to erase the lived experience of women by subjugating them. This stance seeks to discredit the universal 'truth' offered by patriarchy and replaces it with a nuanced understanding of diversity and difference. The major themes of postmodern feminism, says Buzzanell, are "deconstruction and avoidance of unified feminist perspectives" (p. 350).

Since marginalization and the subjugation of women in the Afghan public sphere occurs in a postcolonial nation, it becomes necessary to narrow down the study of feminist theories to postcolonial feminism. Badran (2009) states that feminisms are produced in particular places and theories are articulated in local terms. Feminist movements emerged in Asian and Middle Eastern countries as a response to particular issues faced by the local and national contexts present in these societies. Postcolonial feminism initially grew as a response to Western traditional feminist theories' tendency to universalize the issues important to Western women.

Postcolonial feminism (Mishra, 2013) seeks to reclaim the culture of the feminine subaltern and her right to speak and be heard as an independent agent. Like postmodern feminism, postcolonial feminism privileges difference, and works toward procuring social, cultural, economic, and religious freedoms for women, but it does so while being attentive to the postcolonial ethos.

Mohanty (1991) states that earlier Western feminism theories and postcolonial ideologies have marginalized the experiences of women in postcolonial nations by constructing hegemonic narratives about their lived experience as seen through the lens of Western feminism. Women in Third World countries are thus seen as illiterate, poor, victimized and wholly incapable of

speaking for themselves and in need of liberation. Additionally, she says that traditional Western feminism thinks of Third World women in a collectivistic sense, conflating their individual essences into a sense of a homogenous whole, which is problematic in the context of the earlier discussion of Spivak's work. By holding traditional Western feminism as the normative discourse against which postcolonial feminist issues are evaluated, the traditional Western feminism movement silences the subaltern woman. In order to truly understand the situational issues surrounding women's lived experiences in postcolonial spaces, one should understand them within the frameworks of the historical contexts and cultural differences that places and cultures the Third World present.

Mohanty (1991) examines postcolonial thought in relations to religious ideologies as well, particularly speaking about Shi'ism in Iran and *Pirzada* women's experiences. By understanding the issues particular to these women as oppressed by Islam as an ideology, while leaving out various other issues such as social and power relations within society, scholars simplify the issue while reducing the individuality of women into a homogeneity. Furthermore, Mohanty (1991) states that by understanding a version of Islam as *the* Islam, scholars attribute a singularity to it that is at odds with the plurality of the actual enactment of it across different cultures. This singular understanding of Islam then becomes imposed on the narrative of the victimized Muslim woman.

In exploring the place of women in Muslim societies, Islamic feminism becomes extremely relevant to the discussion. Islamic feminism "is a feminist discourse and practice articulated within an Islamic paradigm" (Badran, 2009, p. 252). It advocates for Quran-mandated women's rights, gender equality, and social justice. Movements of Islamic reforms in various Middle Eastern nations have sought to re-read the Quran, re-interpreting it as a woman-sensitive

text. Islamic feminism takes the view that the Quran supports equality for all human beings, and that equality of men and women has been subverted by patriarchal ideologies in various societies. Suppression of women's rights and gender inequality in Islamic societies is due to patriarchal and manipulative interpretation of *hadith* (sayings of the prophet Muhammad) in service of political motives (Mernissi, 1992). Patriarchal applications of jurisprudence in the ninth century have given rise to contemporary notions of the place of women in society, and Islamic feminism seeks to redress these interpretations of Islamic thought (Badran, 2009).

It is important to note here that Islamic feminism is a global phenomenon and Islamic feminists work both within the Western and Eastern nations to further their understanding of the place of women in society as decreed by a woman-centered reading of Islamic texts (Badran, 2009). Muslim women are striving to articulate and transform their role in societies in different nations through Islamic feminism. Taken together with postcolonial though, Islamic feminism and postcolonial feminism can inform the particular challenges inherent in reforming patriarchal dominant discourses in postcolonial and Islamic nations. In the context of this project, the perspectives covered above offer a place to enter the conversation in the public sphere in Afghanistan while remaining attentive to the particular historical and cultural contexts it presents.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the ideas of Orientalism and Postcolonialism primarily through the work of Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak as a more thorough understanding of the discourses that can take place in transnational communication. Feminist theory was studies in three of its forms - postmodern feminism, postcolonial feminism and Islamic feminism - as a way to understand the discourses of equality, rights and social justice for women. Communicating

across national, cultural, social, gender and religious boundaries has its own particular sets of difficulties, and the analysis of these areas was intended as a way to inform these problems.

The understanding of knowledge and power proves central to this project in a number of ways. First, it is significant in transnational communication because communicative actors coming from a variety of ideological backgrounds need to understand their biases and prejudices for developing a sense of self before interacting with the Other in a suitable fusion of horizons (Gadamer, 2004). The recognition of the embeddedness of communicative actors in historical and cultural contexts speaks to the issue of interpretation of the self as well as the discourse with the Other.

Orientalism, postcolonialism and feminism also raise the question of representation in speaking for the Other as explained by Spivak, Said and various feminist theorists. The issue of representation is especially important to this work as the non-governmental organizations that will be the object of study in chapter six should take care to understand the lived experience of the women they are seeking to make space for, and should not in any way attempt to speak *for* them or provide a voice for them. The literature examined above makes it clear that the voice of the marginalized needs to speak of their ways of knowledge production, community development and cultural expertise without the privileged other speaking for them.

In looking at the feminist and gender-based perspectives of public relations as providing a space for women in the Afghan public sphere, this work will also steer clear of the Western feminist paradigm as an inadequate representation of the issues facing women in postcolonial and Islamic nations. Alternatively, it will look toward postmodern feminism, postcolonial feminism and particularly Islamic feminism as important discourses that can speak to the issues facing women in Afghanistan.

Finally, taken in conjunction with the examination of the public sphere in chapter two, this chapter provides a greater texturing to the sense of place where the public relations discourse takes place. The understanding of the space as the public sphere, as well as its historical and cultural positioning within the Orientalist, postcolonial and feminist spheres of scholarship provide a finer understanding of the particular issues prevalent within this space.

Chapter Four - Public Relations in the Public Sphere

> It is in conducting the affairs of civil society, that mankind find the exercise of their best talents, as well as the object of their best affections (Ferguson, 1767, p. 149).

Introduction

After looking at the different forms and structures of the public sphere as the space where public relations occurs, and then exploring the oriental, postcolonial and feminist ethos in an effort to move the conversation into a transnational notion of public spaces and voices within them, this work now focuses on public relations as the architect in incorporating different voices in the public sphere.

Public relations is the public communicative act of building mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics (What is Public Relations? 2016). Being a public activity, public relations takes place in the public sphere and facilitates individuals' access to various spheres of public discussion while maintaining relationships between organizations and their publics (Sommerfeldt, 2012). Hiebert (2005) recognizes the role that public relations plays in the public sphere when he suggests that new communication technologies promote dialogic communication in the public sphere, thus preserving a two-way model of public relations.

Public relations as a concept is also connected to the ideas of democracy and civil society. Scholars (Heath, Waymer and Palenchar, 2013; Sommerfeldt, 2012; Heath, 2011; Castells, 2008; Heibert, 2005) have argued that the dialogic nature of public relations can be considered a ground for deliberative democracy to emerge. Other scholars have looked at civil

society as a necessary precondition for dialogic public relations to take place (Taylor, 2010; Taylor, 2009; Taylor, 2010; Hauser, 1998).

However, critics (Dutta-Bergman, 2005; Dutta, 2009) of these ideas have pointed out that the public sphere does not provide equal access to all, and that the knowledge structures of the democratic ideal and civil society only serve to further imperialist and neocolonial notions of power and control over the marginalized societies in Third World nations. Postcolonial theory and subaltern theory are studied as ways to listen to the subaltern and bring their voices to bear on the discourse taking place in the public sphere.

In this chapter, I will look at how public relations can take place in the public sphere - both in a liberal democratic public sphere as well as in oriental and postcolonial spaces where the public sphere might not be as inclusive. The relationship between public relations, the public sphere, democracy and civil society will be studied as a way to understand the applications and implications of conducting public relations campaigns across national, cultural and religious boundaries. I will also look at literature that situates the practice of public relations in public spaces that are composed of subaltern and marginalized voices in an effort to determine how public relations practices can help in social change in these societies. Finally, I will examine the culture-centered approach as a way to practice public relations that is invitational to diverse publics.

Public Relations, Democracy and Civil Society

The notion of the public sphere is closely connected to democracy. Raupp (2004) states that public relations serves the function of creating a consensus in society in order to carry out constitute functions of democracy within the public sphere. The rhetorical and deliberative function of the public sphere has been considered a ground for deliberative and democratic

nations to emerge. Habermas (1991) advances a discursive model of the public sphere where rational and critical debate paves the way for an enlightened citizenry, who take part in legitimizing the actions of governing bodies. The public sphere, situated between the state and society, has been considered vital to the maintenance of democracy (Sommerfeldt, 2012). Discourse within the public sphere produces the public opinion that is so integral to the decision-making at the governmental level. According to Castells (2008), the public sphere helps to promote democracy as it helps societal organization and leads to engaged publics that seek social change.

Public dialogue is an essential part generating public opinion (Hauser, 1998) in the public sphere. Public relations performs the function of advocacy (Edgett, 2001), which is necessary to generate public dialogue with and between individuals and organizations in society. Edgett defines advocacy as "the act of publicly representing an individual, organization, or idea with the object of persuading targeted audiences to look favorably on--or accept the point of view of--the individual, the organization, or the idea" (p. 1). Public relations ensures the presence of multiple and competing voices advocating in the public sphere, which is necessary to provide a fair and effective debate of public issues. Heibert (2005) argues that “democracy can only exist when competing interests can occupy the public sphere” (p. 1). When diverse voices have the agency to speak in the public sphere, the function of democratic deliberation is carried out, and public relations can provide the agency to diverse and multiple voices in the public sphere.

Heath, Waymer and Palenchar (2013) look at the notions of democracy, rhetoric and public relations, and the way these three terms intersect to provide a rhetorical construct of public relations that can be compatible with the idea of different voices within a democratic nation. Evaluation of Ivy Lee's work has furthered the argument that public relations used in

conjunction with journalism and its ideals could pave the way for a communicative and deliberative democratic process in society (St. John, 2006).

However, as was discussed in chapter two with Habermas' (1991) work on the public sphere, private corporations have been accused of controlling the public sphere and public opinion to further their own self-interests. Boyd and Waymer (2011) look at the issues of agency and the role of organizational rhetoric in society to propose that organizations generally speak toward three interests: "the interests of the members of the organizations speaking, the self-interests of the organizations qua organizations, and the hidden interests (and possible marginalization due in part to those hidden interests, involved in organizational messages" (p. 476). In all of these cases, it appears that organizational voices inhibit public opinion and the emergence of diverse voices by maintaining power and an elite status in the public sphere.

Toward this issue, Heath (2011) proposes that organizations should be attentive to not only internal rhetoric, but also external rhetoric in order to understand and participate in sociopolitical discourse in society. Listening and reacting to diverse voices outside the organization, Heath says, will be crucial in ethical public relations practices for organizations in service of the greater public good. He proposes the rhetorical model of public relations that calls for openness to difference of opinion that speak for the needs and interests of diverse individuals and groups in society (Heath, 2012). Therefore, in order to ensure constructive public relations communication that recognizes different and diverse public interests on the part of organizations, Heath, Waymer and Palenchar (2013) propose that "rhetorical theory and the democratic theory of self-governance can help inform and more wisely guide the theory and practice of public relations" (p. 273). They conclude that the call is for "an ideal public relations which is…based

on the spirit of Isocratic citizenship" (p. 273), where public relations can be employed in a role that serves society as a whole and looks toward the collective interests of all.

Communicative participation and public deliberation in society, which public relations can aid in, seems to presuppose the existence of a populace that can and will voice their opinion in the public sphere. In other words, the democratic ideal proposed above seems to take for granted the presence of a tolerant civil society. Calhoun (2011) maintains that civil society is an essential precondition of democratization of a society. Taylor (2010) situates the practice of public relations within civil society by arguing that civil society is a foundation for thinking of public relations as a macro-theoretical perspective to communication within the public sphere. Taylor (2009) defines civil society as "a normative model of how people should participate in their communities" (p. 76). Taylor sees civil society as a process where rhetoric is used to build relationships and trust among communicative partners in the public sphere. The discursive process of the civil society promotes co-created meaning between individuals or groups. She states that "public relations' role in society is to create (and re-create) the conditions that enact civil society" (2010, p. 7).

Hauser (1998) looks at the evolution of civil society through the ages, starting from civic society in ancient Greek and Roman society, where individuals communicated publicly about civic virtue. He contends that the principle of the modern public sphere came into being "when civil society replaced civic virtue as the dominant model for social organization" (p.22) during the Enlightenment. He defines civil society as "a network of associations independent of the state, whose members through social interactions that balance conflict and consensus, seek to regulate themselves in ways consistent with a valuation of difference" (p. 26). The basis of civil

society is an interaction with difference and the network of associations that emerge from such interactions with the other.

The discourse within civil society is conducted separate from the discourse of state-based organizations, or any other authoritative institutions like the feudal lord or the church during the period from which civil society emerged. Hauser (1998) states that these new discursive spaces provided the emergence of "a public sphere in which a public could form its own opinion" (p. 30). The structural and discursive features of civil society, says Hauser, illustrate a superordinate public sphere that contains multiple discursive arenas where publics emerge according to their interests. These discursive functions of civil society produce a communal consciousness where people with different opinions can interact with each other within the public sphere on the basis of developed common meanings.

Taylor (2010) agrees that tolerance of differing opinions is a central aspect of civil society. She defines civil society as "a communicative process grounded in information, communication, and relationships" (p. 7). She builds on Hauser's concept of multiple discursive arenas as well, saying that the nested arenas of the public sphere are dependent on first, an individual or a group who feels safe to voice their opinion (2009). As we will see in the following evaluation of Taylor's work and its interaction with Dutta-Bergman's and other post-colonial scholars, safe or free speech might not be available to all. Second, Taylor says, there must be trusted channels for the message to be sent. Again, this might prove problematic in post-colonial nations or in the case of subalterns who might not have access to the spaces to voice their message. Third, Taylor says, speech in the various arenas of the public sphere requires people who are actively listening to the discourse that is occurring. This too can be challenging for the subaltern, as their message, even if spoken, often goes unheard. Finally, Taylor points to

facilitative systems that can provide a way for people to heed and act on the message that is being transmitted through the discourse. For marginalized publics, this also would be unattainable.

The very idea of civil society or democracy as a prerequisite for the smooth functioning of public relations seems to be problematic, not only because of the subaltern and marginalized publics cannot access the public sphere and thus cannot speak, but also because the society and structures that these scholars speak of is not a given in many nation states. Transnational public relations practices thus need to occur without the support of the structures of civil society or democratic societies.

Dutta-Bergman (2005) critiques the notion of civil society as essential for public relations by stating that Western institutions have continued an imperialist domination of subaltern nations under the guise of promoting civil society. Taylor (2009) responds to his claim, stating that the establishment civil society that creates discourse in the public sphere can provide a "rationale and method for critiquing instances of…imperialist messages and activities" (p. 88). However, in Taylor's understanding of an ideal civil society and public relations practices within it, she fails to account for the marginalized and subaltern individuals who, as we have seen in the last chapter, fail to even have a voice or a space within the public sphere. She states that in order for public relations in civil society to work, "people must have information, and they must be interested and able to pursue what they believe to be right" (2010, p. 8), and goes on to say that "if we accept public relations as the use of communication to negotiate relationships among groups, then we should also accept that any group could engage in public relations" (p. 13). What Taylor fails to realize is that this ideal state of civil society does not exist in postcolonial and marginalized societies.

Public Relations in Postcolonial Spaces

Gayatri Spivak (1994) baldly states that the subaltern cannot speak. With this proclamation, she speaks to issues of voice and access of the marginalized, where the voice of the subaltern is erased by both inattentiveness of those in power, and her inability to access the power structures and principal spaces of the public sphere where discourse occurs. In being marginalized from these spaces, the subaltern is in effect voiceless, or unable to be heard by the elite. Hauser (1998) understands the issue of the voiceless when he states that Habermas' bourgeoisie public sphere has been criticized as being exclusionary toward women and other minorities. It is inclusive only of the rational and engaged citizenry, and thus represents only certain voices within the public sphere. In contrast to the Habermasian public sphere, in Hauser's (1999) pluralistic public sphere, the diverse publics are able to find spaces to speak in relation to the issues that are of relevance to them. The ideal civil society in these multiple public spheres works because there are multiple arenas of the public sphere that are permeable to the diverse publics that can enter them. However, Hauser (1998) cautions that openness and permeability cannot always be the case. Promotion of special interests, powerful communicative actors, distorted information or issues of access to media may be some of the reasons by which the permeable boundaries of multiple arenas of the public sphere may still not be open to all speakers.

Raupp (2004) points out that the consideration of the public sphere as one of the central concepts of public relations is a specifically European approach. By idealizing the civil society, scholars elevate it to a form of "true" participatory democratic communication. However, efforts to promote the supremacy of democracy and civil society in marginalized nations fail because the subaltern exists outside of civil society (Dutta, 2005). Dutta (2009) even argues that the

language of democracy used by Western nations in their aid to marginalized nations and societies of the world serves to co-opt participatory spaces. In privileging the discourse of democracy, Western nations erase the subaltern voices and preserve a sense of control by imposing a knowledge structure over Third World spaces. Moreover, dominant voices within the public sphere assimilate the dispossessed and marginalized publics into "bourgeoisie elite organizations" (Dutta-Bergman, 2005, p. 274) that, under the guide of aid to economically poor nations, propagate transnational hegemony by furthering the knowledge structure of democracy as the only correct political organization for societies. This, Dutta-Bergman says, has the effect of taking away the agency of indigenous people, who are no longer seen fit to form their own governing structures.

Dutta echoes Raupp's assessment of public relations being rooted in the public sphere being a European ideal when he states: "As a modernist enterprise, the practice of public relations is squarely located within the realm of modernity. Its ideals and values are embedded within the Eurocentric logics that constitute much of the practice, theorizing, and empirical observations carried out in public relations" (2009, p. 287). Dutta-Bergman (2005) also critiques the individualistic bent of Western society's privileging of democracy and civil society, rather than more collective of community-based structures of governance that might be more common and native to other parts of the world. When we consider a transnational form of public relations theory and practice, we need to understand public relations from the point of view of engaging publics who are non-Western as well, favoring their ways of thinking and being. We should also keep in mind that large parts of the world have been restrained under the weight of colonization and neocolonization, and thus do not have the opportunity or space to speak.

Postcolonial theorists like Spivak and Dutta operate from a place of an understanding of the lived experience of the subaltern, rather than imposing Western ontological and epistemological philosophies on them. The Eurocentric view of scholars like Taylor and Habermas, on the other hand, is not a 'fitting response' (Schrag, 1986) to the reality or the experience of marginalized and colonized peoples. While postcolonial theorists approach transnational communication in a very pragmatic way, Western theorists' views are utterly impractical when it comes to attending to the 'dwelling place' (Schrag, 1986) of the subaltern. In privileging and imposing the "ideal" European view over the realities of the subaltern existence, Western theorists negate the subaltern's ways of knowledge production and communication. It is because of this reason that we turn to postcolonial theory as an entrance to thinking about transnational public relations in postcolonial spaces.

If we consider public relations as a way of various stakeholders to communicate with each other for their mutual benefit, Dutta (2009) states that postcolonial theory becomes an important element in transnational public relations as it asks which stakeholders get represented within discursive spaces and which ones are erased? Postcolonial theory, also being concerned with the dynamics of power and control of knowledge structures within society, seeks to determine who has the power to speak within the public sphere and which knowledge structures are being privileged. Postcolonial theory also looks at the issue of agency. If the subaltern cannot speak, is she being represented? By whom? And to what end?

Citing Spivak's work, Dutta (2009) says that postcolonial theory attempts to overthrow modernist and Eurocentric knowledge structures by speaking "against them, over them, and from below them", inviting voices that never had the chance to participate in the public sphere. It seeks to provide redress to victims of epistemic violence (Spivak, 1994) - an infliction of harm

against the marginalized subjects through discourse. Epistemic violence, in texts and speech, creates Others and excludes them from political and social legitimization, rendering them invisible in society. Writing or speaking from a place of privilege without attending to the lived experience of the subaltern is akin to transnational oppression if the voice of the subaltern is silenced in speaking *for* them. Thus, postcolonial theory tries to redress this epistemic violence done to the subaltern, and makes way for recognizing the subaltern and their ways of knowledge production as constructive approaches toward communication.

In an effort to interrupt hegemonic discourses, Dutta (2011) proposes the culture-centered approach, which "participates in co-constructive possibilities for listening to the voices of the groups at the margins and narrates the stories of subaltern resistance that are directed toward transforming structures" (pp. 4-5). The culture-centered approach is attentive to both culture and structure of society, and seeks to start dialogues with the marginalized and subaltern members of society. It starts to de-center the hegemonic discourses presented by the dominant elite and replaces them with epistemologies of and narratives of the marginalized voices.

Dutta's (2011) approach focuses on the agency of the subaltern and gives them the opportunity to join discourses that are important to them, and the opportunity to join them from the point of their own epistemologies. This is particularly important for social change, as marginalized communities can have a say in the way their society is shaped rather than conform to a structure that is imposed on them.

The work of the public relations practitioner in such societal change would be to make space for the voices of the marginalized that have historically been removed by dominant discourses in the public sphere. By questioning dominant discourses and making space for dialogues with the subaltern, the public relations practitioner is in effect "continually

participat[ing] in the production and reproduction of knowledge that constitutes the terrains of communication for social change" (Dutta, 2011, p. 287).

Conclusion

This chapter examined the idea of public relations related to the ideals of the public sphere, democracy and civil society. Transnational public relations communication across borders requires understanding the theory and practice of public relations from differing points of view, so the next part of the chapter looked at postcolonial theory as a lens through which public relations practitioners could recognize the subaltern and seek to provide spaces for the marginalized to interrupt dominant hegemonic discourses.

In practicing public relations across nations, especially in marginalized communities, practitioners should be aware of the dominant knowledge structures that have been used historically and systematically to erase the voices of the subaltern. Dutta (2011) states that a culture-centered approach should be used to overturn these dominant discourses to make space for voices of the Other to emerge. He advocates listening to the dispossessed as a way of providing recognition to their voices, and then helping their narratives emerge into the public sphere.

Situating public relations in the public sphere and inviting marginalized voices into dialogic engagement is an integral part of this particular project as the public spaces for women's voices in Afghanistan are limited at best or nonexistent in the worst cases. Dialogic communication is key in practicing transnational public relations in order to make sure that multiple voices are participating in the multiple arenas (Hauser, 1998) of the public sphere. Attentiveness to diversity, difference and the lived situation is essential to providing an open public space with permeable boundaries that can be potentially accessed by all.

Additionally, the involvement of the United States has been criticized as an imperialist intervention in the guise of providing freedom or emancipation to women in Afghanistan. It becomes imperative to examine the knowledge structures from which both organizational actors perform in the public sphere, and the epistemologies and ontologies that are present in the historical and societal culture of Afghanistan. Public relations practitioners should take care to act according to the shared reference world of Afghans rather than imposing their understanding of an idealized political or social structure.

Finally, this chapter furthers the conception of the entire project of transnational public relations by introducing the idea of public relations as the communicative function in the public spaces that were examined in the last two chapters. Western and Muslim forms of the public sphere were examined in chapter two, and Orientalism, postcolonialism and feminist discourses were examined in chapter three - this chapter moves the conversation forward by looking at Western as well as postcolonial ways to practice public relations to further dialogic communication in an open, inclusive public sphere.

Chapter Five - The Theory and Practice of Transnational Public Relations

> The relationships between culture, communication, context, and power in practice (as well as in scholarship) needs to be a key focus if we are to stay intellectually current, keep providing suggestions for how to improve practice, and genuinely engage questions of ethics and social responsibility in public relations in a rapidly globalizing and interconnected world (Bardhan & Weaver, 2011, p. 2).

Introduction

Public relations practitioners are considered intermediaries between an organization and its publics, working in a way such that both parties benefit or attain mutual gains (Susskind & Field, 1996) from the communication that takes place between them. As the Public Relations Society of America's definition of public relations puts it: "Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics" (What is Public Relations? 2016). Focusing on the idea that public relations is a communication function that builds relationships between publics and organizations, it is important to study transnational public relations as rhetorical relationship-building, especially when practiced in postcolonial nations.

We live in a world that is a global village (McLuhan, 1962), and transnationalism is a growing norm in today's day and age. Appadurai (2003) states that we now live in a postnational world that requires thinking beyond the national state. Due to the growth of globalization, technological advances and cyber connectivity, individuals are now in a space where cultural identity is informed not only by close physical or geographical associations, but also by real-time

communication across nations and borders (McLuhan, 1962). Transnational communication transcends borders and heightens interconnectivity between people around the world.

Transnational public relations is different from both international and global public relations. Anderson (1989) defines the latter two as: "International public relations practitioners very often implement distinctive programs in multiple markets, with each program tailored to meet the often acute distinctions of the individual geographic market" and "Global public relations superimposes an overall perspective on a program executed in two or more national markets, recognizing the similarities among audiences while necessarily adapting to regional differences" (p. 413). Distinct from the international and the global, transnational public relations seeks to transcend borders while striving for interconnectivity between individuals around the world.

Building on the review of literature conducted in the previous chapters on the public sphere, Orientalism and postcolonial ethos, and conducting public relations in western and postcolonial public spheres, there are a variety of issues that are essential to consider in the theory and practice of transnational public relations in postcolonial nations. These are: understanding the non-western public sphere and the involvement (or non-involvement) of actors in it; examining the identity of postcolonial or subaltern voices as communicative actors; and practicing public relations within a space that strives to provide equal access to or engagement with subaltern and marginalized voices.

In this chapter, I will attempt to describe public relations praxis across transnational and postcolonial spaces. The specific research question being answered here would be: how should PR practitioners approach public relations in transnational locations, particularly in postcolonial places? In order to do this, I will first briefly review the literature about globalization,

internationalism and transnationalism as well as transnational and international public relations; and will then study the rhetorical model of public relations (van Ruler & Heath, 2008) as a valuable starting point to engaging postcolonial publics in dialogue. The rhetorical model of public relations will be informed by a culture-centered approach (Dutta, 2011) toward public relations practice, along with knowledge of postcolonial theory and subaltern studies, as a way to attend to the cultural nuances particularly in postcolonial nations. Theories from philosophical hermeneutics and phenomenology will also be studied in order to inform the theory-building and practices of transnational public relations. Lastly, relationship-building within "interlocking group formations and loyalties" (Bernays, 1928, p. 55) will be explored as a particular strategy that can be used in collectivistic and high context cultures to inform public relations practice and theory.

Globalization, Internationalism and Transnationalism

This section deals with identifying and differentiating the terms global, international and transnational. The three terms have been used interchangeably by some authors in the field, but Bayly, et. al. (2006) argue that there are fine differences between each of these terms. While some authors point to a difference in conceptual terms between the notions (Bayly, et. al., 2006), others see difference in political demarcations between state and non-state actors (Nye & Keohane, 1971; Stokes, 2004). Knight (2004) offers a way to demarcate the three terms that I've found most useful. She states,

> The term *international* emphasizes the notion of nation and refers to the relationship between and among different nations and countries. *Transnational* is used in the sense of across nations and does not specifically address the notion of relationships. *Transnational* is often used interchangeably and in the same way as *cross-border*. *Global*, on the other

> hand, refers to worldwide in scope and substance and does not highlight the concept of nation (p. 8).

We will first review the term 'global' or 'globalization', then look at 'international' and 'transnational' in an effort to distinguish between the three interconnected but distinct ideas.

The term and idea of globalization is a contested issue. James and Steger (2014) state that the use of the term 'globalization' is a fairly new concept, being in discursive prominence mostly since the 1990s, but the process of globalization has been happening for centuries. A historical understanding of the origin of globalization by Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton (1999) states that it evolved in four phases: pre-modern, 900-1000; early modern, 1500-1850; modern, 1850-1945; and contemporary, 1945 to the present. Technological advances and easy access of vast amounts of information are particular characteristics of the contemporary phase of globalization (Friedman, 2005). Robertson & White's (2003) scholarship explains views where globalization is considered a particularly recent and Western concept, linked particularly to American hegemony.

The term and concept of globalization has been employed in various fields to mean different things - for example, in describing the global life of the mind in education, from an economic point of view of global markets in international relations and economics, in journalism to study the issues of world reporting, and the study of migrations of peoples across various nation states in sociology and anthropology (James & Steger, 2014).

Globalization is understood by different people differently based on their particular viewpoints. Kambutu (2013) states that positionality matters in making sense of the various metaphors and lenses used to understand globalization. For example, he states that metaphors like the 'global village' or the 'network of interdependence' might be used by nations and peoples

that benefit from globalization, while critical metaphors like 'Neo-colonialism' are prevalent among nations and peoples that are at a disadvantage when it comes to the application of globalized principles.

The rise of the internet and other communication technologies has perhaps been the most influential in giving rise to the ideas of an interconnected and interdependent society as opposed to one that is grounded in physical, cultural, economic and political boundaries. Various technologies have spurred interaction between different groups of peoples, so that there is an increased sense of understanding and sharing between communities from different parts of the world (Kambutu & Nganga, 2008). For example, scholarship about 'global teens' points to the sharing of cultural interests, fashions and music across nations through the use of the internet (Parker, 2005). Marketers have paid attention to the phenomenon and the consumption behavior of the 'global teen' is being shaped by global marketing practices and strategies that appeal to emerging trends in fashion and music (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006). Thus, communication technology, the internet and mobile phones are building a community of cultural interconnectedness and sharing in the midst of people who are physically and geographically distant from each other.

However, critics of globalization point to increasing social injustices being the cause and effects of globalization. Scholars (Miller, 2010; Steger, 2009) point to the furthering neoliberal political, economic and social agendas by Western elites from an ethnocentric viewpoint, considering it an ill-considered coopting of ways of thinking and being in disadvantaged nations, leading to an increase in social injustice of marginalized peoples. Lee (2012) states that wealthy and powerful nations carry out political, economic and social hegemonies at the expense of human and civil rights in disadvantaged nations. Bayly, et. al. (2006) consider the application of

the term 'global' to mean an application of World Systems Theory which tends to "flatten the complexities of the "Third World". In such flattening, the "Third World" becomes the victim of the forces of the capital/the North/the metropole. The political complexity of "the South" disappears." (p. 1443). The spread of the culture, ideology and cultural artifacts of the United States are especially under fire under the term 'McDonaldization' or the McWorld phenomenon. The power and hegemony of U.S.-led military action is also criticized for imposing a way of life on other peoples and cultures (Barber & Schulz, 1996).

To summarize, a global understanding can prove beneficial in terms of providing an interconnectedness and shared mindset around the world. It can, in its best sense, be the cause for a common viewpoint, shared understanding and broadening of social, political and moral points of view. However, the term also encompasses within it a sense of the loss of particularity when critics point to a loss of agency of the postcolonial or Third World due to the ethnocentric impositions of ideology or hegemonic social, economic or military discourse. Issues of power on the part of various nation-states play a role in the application of which knowledge structures and discourses are privileged and recognized as the ones that are globally accepted. A global or universal mindset points to a 'one size fits all' kind of approach to shared values and identification techniques, which can have the effect of erasing the local.

The terms international and transnational, however, differ from what is termed global or globalization. Transnationalism is defined as "those normative traditions of political thought that encompass ways of thinking and acting about issues, events and conditions that transcend the nation state" (Stokes, 2004, p. 121). Internationalism, in the other hand, is "the principle that in the interests of greater prosperity and security, nation states must collaborate in international organizations" (p. 122). Internationalism is based on a global order that envisions nation states'

adherence to universal laws and international institutions. Under the term internationalism, nation states agree to cooperate with each other under a set of common rules and institutional regimes bound by universal values, such as human rights.

The term 'international', then, refers to inter-state interactions. The reconfiguration of nation-states finally led to research that was more transnational in nature. Nineteenth and twentieth century theories like modernization, dependency theory and Marxism revolve around the state as the central actor in how economic growth can take place particularly in developing nations (Bayly, 2006). A transnational conception of understanding these issues recognizes that there are many actors independent of the state, like individuals, communities or organizations, that can also be the drivers of economic and social change. Traditional political and social formations of a state-led understanding are rejected by the transnational approach, which introduces multiple focal points on issues in the world in additional to a national or inter-national lens.

Iriye and Saunier (2009) point to nations as being seen and empowered as the main frames for how human life was understood in relation to political, cultural, economic and social ways in scholarship in the nineteenth century to the present. Through the lens of the nation-state, scholars understood the ideas and ways that people thought and lived, and thus a conversation across the borders of nations was considered international. The term 'transnational' though, is interested in the "links and flows and [tracking] of people, ideas, products, processes and patterns that operate over, across, through, beyond, above, under, or in-between polities and societies" (p. xviii).

Bayly, et. al. (2006) state that the desire to move away from the term globalization or internationalism has been due to trying to break away from the nation-state as a category of

analysis, and "especially to eschew the ethnocentrism that once characterized the writing of history in the West" (p. 1441). The term 'transnational' "gives a sense of movement and interpenetration" (p. 1442) across national boundaries, being attentive to the complex linkages, networks and actors across nation-states. Appadurai (2003) defines transnational thinking as focused on the 'space of flows', concerning itself with movements, flows and circulation within and between nations. Bayly et. al. (2006) state that "the claim of transnational methods is not simply that historical processes are made in different places, but that they are constructed in the movement between places, sites, and regions" (p. 1444).

The intellectual genealogy of the term is related to other traditions such as "studies of African diaspora and transnational forms of blackness, studies of imperialism and/or capitalism, various stripes of Marxist analysis of international movements, area studies…, postcolonial theory, comparative literature and questions of translation," (Bayly, et. al., 2006, p. 1444). The term 'transnational' grew to take into account "a whole range of connections that transcend politically bounded territories and connect various parts of the world to one another. Networks, institutions, ideas and processes constitute these connections" (p. 1446), not traditional nation-state boundaries.

Kozol states that transnationalism emerged from a focus on social justice activism across borders (Bayly, et. al., 2006). Critiques of U.S. and European imperialism and challenges to gender inequalities and heteronormativity also paved the way for the emergence of the field. Anticolonial movements, feminist rights, civil rights and LGBT movements have been instrumental in shaping the discourse about transnational movements. For example, in the review of postcolonial feminism (Mohanty, 1988), it was pointed out that global feminism was critiqued as not being nuanced enough to understand the particular issues of postcolonial women's

experiences and resources. In such a case, transnational feminists have paid attention to processes and institutions such as colonialism, modernization, and various feminist movements have affected the lived experience of women in Third World nations.

The effect of a "technological juggernaut" (Bayly, 2006, p. 1455) - the internet and mobile communication - is apparent on the changing communicative spaces in our world today. Transnational communication is transacted through electronic means, both in terms of communication with and between individuals, and within the academic discipline and scholarship. It has "altered the ways in which we teach, communicate with our colleagues, and disseminate our research across national boundaries" (p. 1455). Cyber communication is also helping to create "social and intellectual groups among people separated by long distances and multiple time zones" (p. 1455). Through the advances in technology and communication, the way transnationalism is being enacted is changing both between individuals holding transnational identities as well as in disseminating scholarship or particular social movement messages inherent to the work of transnationalism and transnational advocacy.

In evaluating issues of migration and identity, Basch, Schiller and Blanc (2005) define transnationalism as "the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (p. 6). Transnationalism rejects the notion that social identity of individuals is tied to geographical space. The hegemonic representation of spatially bound identity is especially problematic for immigrants and diasporic communities, who form social linkages across geographical, cultural and political borders. Immigrants and members of diasporic communities develop and maintain membership in multiple relationships with individuals and organizations, for example "familial, economic, social, organizational, religious and political" (p. 6) relationships that showcase the

interconnections that they have forged. Levitt and Schiller (2004) state that social processes and institutional memberships of immigrants can be studied in a clearer manner when the lens of transnationalism is used as opposed to traditional migration theories. Transnationalism resides within a larger intellectual project that looks at other fields of study and interacts with them to produce a richer and more nuanced understanding of the lived experience of individuals who transcend the boundaries of the nation-state.

In addition to studying immigration, scholarship related to transnationalism is focused on non-state organizational actors that work in different fields and different parts of the world. Khagram, Riker and Sikkink (2002) and contributors to their edited volume study the contributions of social and activist non-state institutions. These "transnational networks, coalitions or movements…have the potential to transform both domestic and political systems and international politics, especially by creating issues, mobilizing new constituencies, altering understandings of interests and identities, and sometimes changing state practices" (p. vii). Advocacy groups and nongovernmental organizations are increasingly moving across and between borders in their work toward highlighting particular issues that might affect populations living in different parts of the world. Tarrow (2005) states that the most interesting characteristic of transnational activism is that it connects the local to the global. Transnational activism is also transformative, in that it transforms the transnational actors, the connections among them, and strategies of engaging with each other. It also has the possibility of transforming political and social arenas of the places and actors that it engages.

In terms of the interconnectedness that a transnational approach brings, Connelly states that "the world is both coming together and coming apart because the processes of integration lead to new kinds of fragmentation" (Bayly, 2006, p. 1458). He explains, for example, that in

gaining a transnational sense of community, one can lose a sense of national solidarity. When publics come together for a cause like gender equality, human rights or biodiversity, there is a strengthening across borders related to the cause, but this can also give rise to new borders within societies that can be conceived as groups being clustered around an issue. This conception of a transnational society with multiple arenas where individuals can connect to one another by way of their interests points to Hauser's (1999) idea of a reticulate public sphere in which people come together and engage in vernacular discourse around a particular issue.

One of the characteristics of transnationalism is "to avoid falling into "grand narratives"" (Bayly, 2006, p. 1455) that are traditionally put forward as a way of seeing the world. Binary constructions like the North-South, elite-subaltern, dominance-resistance are being swept away and rejected by the transnational approach. Unlike globalization, transnationalism rejects conflating histories and societies and people into one overarching way of thinking and being. While engaging various existing metanarratives, it allows for petit narratives that can better inform the way people exist in their lived realities. Therefore, a transnational approach would be particularly apt for a postmodern world in which we live today.

Transnationalism, as a way of seeing, gives us multiple lenses and ways to see the world. It is,

> open to various methodological preferences, and to many different questions. It takes as its starting point the interconnectedness of human history as a whole, and while it acknowledges the extraordinary importance of states, empires, and the like, it pays attention to networks, processes, beliefs and institutions that transcend these politically defined spaces (Bayly, 2006, p. 1459).

It operates in the spaces between various institutions and finds ways to see connections between them. It works in dialogue with other approaches and provides conversational opening to engage other theoretical approaches like feminism or postcolonialism. Keeping this in mind, later on in this chapter I attempt to inform the theory and practice of transnational public relations by engaging philosophical and rhetorical scholarship from various other fields of study.

In communication literature, Schrag's (1992) notion of transversality demonstrates a transnational understanding, wherein he proposes a transversal understanding of communication that can take place across differences and locations, while being attentive to the very difference it tries to bridge. In recognizing both particularity and diversity, transversality pays attention to the local and the universal. Schrag (1986), by firmly grounding the communicative experience of humans in their lived reality, anchors the way humans think and act in their particular societal localities. At the same time, remaining cognizant of the diversity and difference of worldviews of their communicative partners also paves the way toward identifying with each other and engaging in enlightened exchanges that can lead to a larger sense of understanding between people.

An example of transversal or transnational understanding could be the conception of justice, which even though has a European / Western conception, might also mean different things to different people. In the context of this project, as Abu-Lughod (2002) puts it, "we may want justice for women, but can we accept that there might be different ideas about justice and that different women might want or choose different futures from what we envision as best? We must consider that they might be called to personhood, so to speak, in a different language" (pp. 787-788).

In the service of theorizing and practicing activist transnational public relations, being accepting of difference is important. However, accepting difference does not mean distancing of the communicative actor from that which is different and seeing different individuals as the Other, but understanding difference in the context of an interconnected world. Recognizing and respecting different ways of thinking and being as products of particular histories, social and political circumstances, and religious ideologies is one of the ways through which a transnational approach can help in activist public relations across borders. The next section reviews transnational public relations literature in order to situate theory-building in the field.

Transnational Public Relations

Wakefield's (1996) review of scholarship related to public relations practices in international contexts suggests that the interest in transnational public relations is immense but haphazard. The growing literature suggests that countries are relying on public relations principles from American or European organizations, while adapting those in some way to their own cultures. Botan (1992) asserts that this mere adaptation to another culture's way of practicing public relations is not enough for transnational organizations; it is also necessary to learn from the other culture in order to then reflectively improve one's own discursive practices, thus making sure that both parties learn during the exchange.

Wakefield's (1996) review of international public relations until the 90s shows that most studies in the field have focused on anecdotal or descriptive practices being used by organizations rather than particular theories. Other studies have focused on ways to "avoid cultural blunders" (p. 18). Another issue is that earlier studies have focused on particular countries and how to practice public relations there, rather than aiming at defining an

overarching set of principles or theories that could be applicable in various contexts in transnational public relations (Botan, 1992).

Most of the public relations principles in other countries are introduced through Western multinational corporations and their workings. In later reviews of literature related to transnational public relations, Bardhan and Patwardhan (2004) state that the entry of multinational corporations into host countries has been fraught with issues of neocolonialism and postcolonial anxieties, which necessitates extreme caution on the part of these organizations in employing public relations practices. The authors suggest that public relations activities in these organizations can be successful if the organizational discourse operates in a culturally attuned manner with respect for the local that can be demonstrated through a socially responsible performance on the organization's part.

A study by Bardhan (2003) evaluated the various models of public relations that are currently being employed or could be employed in transnational public relations. Four main models of public relations practice (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) have historically been advanced in Western public relations scholarship, particularly in the United States—the press agentry / publicity model, the public information model, the two-way asymmetrical model, and the two-way symmetrical model (Grunig, Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang & Lyra, 1995). Bardhan (2003) examines each of these models and determines that they are not particularly applicable to the particular issues faced by public relations in other nations. Her conclusions state that the four models understand communications in a linear and individualistic manner, conceptualizing it as a sender--message--channel--receiver and feedback model. However, from a transnational and intercultural perspective, practitioners need to be attentive to other ways of conceptualizing communication, and transactional, collectivistic, interpretive and relational approaches should

also be examined. The personal influence model and the cultural interpreter model (Grunig, et. al, 1995) discussed later might be more suited to the needs of postcolonial nations.

An additional issue of concern is that symmetrical models do not pay adequate attention to issues of power distance (Hofstede, 1980) in emerging nations. The two-way symmetrical model proposed by Grunig, et. al. (1996) does not work as proposed, especially in countries that work on different ideas of power differentials and knowledge production. Application of public relations practices in these nations might lead to the powerful organization co-opting the voices of its less powerful publics. Therefore, according to Holtzhausen (2000), the effort of organizations in these societies should be to examine the inequities fostered by power distance with the aim of fostering relationship-building solutions with various less powerful publics in order to listen to their voices.

Considering the haphazard and inadequate study of transnational public relations, Wakefield (1992) calls for theory building in the field: "a foundation of principles and assumptions that come from scholarly research and theory building on what comprises effective practice in international public relations. Such a base would address *normative* issues, or what effectiveness *ought to* look like." (p. 19). One of the ways scholars can tackle the task of theory building, he says, is to assess theories from related disciplines that can help in laying a foundation for transnational public relations theory. In this chapter, I attempt to do just that by suggesting that transnational public relations theory building needs to be founded on the study and application of good rhetorical practices, attention to the cultural milieu of publics in other nations, knowledge of postcolonial theory and subaltern studies, as well as relationship cultivation in high power distance and collectivistic nations. The next sections will look at these areas of study in relation to transnational public relations.

The Rhetorical Model of Public Relations

In the previous chapter, we reviewed scholarship that linked rhetorical public relations practices to democratic and societal ideals. Various scholars (Heath, Waymer and Palenchar, 2013; Sommerfeldt, 2012; Heath, 2011; Castells, 2008; Heibert, 2005) have concluded that the rhetorical aspect of public relations can be the ground for democracy to emerge. Others (Taylor, 2009; Taylor, 2010) have pointed to the idea that civil society is the basis of dialogic or rhetorical public relations. On the other hand, other scholars (Dutta-Bergman, 2005; Dutta, 2009) have also made the case for civil society being more of a detriment to postcolonial nations as a Eurocentric position reinforces an imperialist Western view of thinking and being on Third World nations.

In this section, I will examine the rhetorical model of public relations (van Ruler & Heath, 2008; Heath, 2009), while dissociating it with any political or societal structures. In my view, the literature reviewed in the last chapter that has pursued the themes of rhetorical discourse within public relations has an idealistic or ideological basis. In this section, I endeavor to explore the underlying elements of and alternative interpretations of rhetorical public relations discourse without the ideas of civil society and democracy being used as terministic screens (Burke, 1969) to obscure the issue and distract communicative actors from understanding the lived experience in postcolonial nations. Burke's notion of the terministic screen speaks of the selections and deselections of words in language systems that can affect perception and symbolic action on the ground. In this case, fusing the terms 'civil society' or 'democracy' to rhetorical discourse serves to provide impediments to understanding the value of rhetorical discourse in nations that have non-democratic political structures or societies that might not be termed as civil societies.

Since rhetoric is considered a natural faculty and a basic feature used by humans (Kennedy, 2001) regardless of geographical location and culture, I will argue that the rhetorical model of public relations can be a valuable resource for the understanding of transnational public relations in spaces that may not support a democratic system of government nor exhibit the Eurocentric vision of civil society.

The rhetorical model of public relations advanced by Heath is based on "the rhetorical heritage reaching back to treatises central to the humanities" (van Ruler & Heath, 2008, para. 36). Since Heath bases his rhetorical model of public relations on the rhetorical tradition (2009), the function and strategies of rhetoric will be briefly outlined through the examination of the historical exchanges and ideas related to the ethical and effective performance of rhetorical discourse.

Rhetoric's roots can be traced back to Ancient Greek literature, from Plato's dismissal of rhetoric as a mere 'knack' rather than a true craft in *Gorgias* (380 BC; Lamb, 2001) to his acceptance of it as the art of enchanting the soul (Plato, 370 BC; Fowler, 2001) in *Phaedrus*. Plato bemoans that the craft of rhetoric has been reduced to mere demagoguery, and charges sophistic methods of teaching and using rhetoric by saying that their knowledge is superficial and amateurish, especially compared to the rigorousness of dialectic (Plato 380 BC; Lamb, 2001). In *Gorgias*, he complains that rhetoric is not based on and nor does it produce true knowledge, that it is a conviction based on *doxa*, or opinion, rather than on learning (454b-455a); that rhetoric has no rational principle or *logos*, and hence does not have the status as a *technē* or discipline based on science and knowledge (*epistēmē*) (462c). It is classified as merely *empeiria*, or knack, that produces instant gratification and pleasure in the speaker and listener. Thus, it is a form of flattery, *kolakeia*, an ethically disgraceful and opportunistic way to pander to the

clamoring of the masses (463a-c). This denouncement of rhetoric from Plato can be taken as a way to evaluate rhetorical discourse. Rhetoric that merely employs superficial knowledge of the subject or audience, or discourse that only seeks to employ appealing words to entertain the audience can be misleading.

However, in *Phaedrus*, Plato seems to take on the project of reforming rhetoric so that it can be based on true knowledge rather than demonstrating merely the appearance of knowledge. He suggests that rhetoric should try to elevate its situation from a mere knack or *empeiria* and adopt the goal of knowing the human soul. Plato believes that an orator's task is to discover the nature of the soul, for it is only then can he plant the virtues that the rhetorician desires in his audience's soul. In this way, rhetoric can plant in the soul "words accompanied by knowledge" (Fowler, 2001, p.164). Consequently, from Plato's critique and eventual attempt at redemption of rhetoric, we can determine the importance of true and deep knowledge of the audience as well as the subject of the speech, and its relationship to good rhetoric.

In its relationship to rhetoric, Heath (2009) points out that public relations as a discipline and its practitioners should be careful to make sure they have the best information gained ethically in order to formulate mutually beneficial outcomes that can serve the larger society. Socially responsible public relations based on rhetoric discourse, says Heath, should move away from manipulation and spin-doctoring toward a more ethically engaged form attentive to the needs of the publics that it serves.

Isocrates, a contemporary of Plato, states that "discourse which is true and lawful and just is the outward image of a good and faithful soul" (Isocrates, 353 BC; Norlin, 2001, p. 75), agreeing that knowledge of the soul and its good and true character are important elements of rhetorical education. Furthermore, according to Isocrates (1929), effective rhetoric requires "a

mind which is capable of finding out and learning the truth" (p. 293), which denotes an emphasis again on learning about the various truths and understandings of the situation as well as context in which the rhetorician speaks.

Perhaps the most important issue concerning this project is Isocrates' mention of dialogic communication in rhetoric. He states, "With this faculty we both contend against others on matters which are open to dispute and seek light for ourselves on things which are unknown; for the same arguments which we use in persuading others when we speak in public, we employ also when we deliberate in our own thoughts" (Isocrates, 1929, p. 327). Thus, rhetoric requires thoughtful and deliberative speech, but is also dialogic in nature as it seeks to engage people on matters that are of public concern.

Heath (2009) notes that Isocrates' view of rhetoric is overwhelmingly geared toward the public good. He advocates for the use of rhetoric in service to society and in the collective interest of all. Concern for others should be the basis of using expertise in rhetorical discourse. This other-centered view of rhetoric is essential to activist and transnational public relations practice as well, since it is our concern for others and the betterment of society as a whole that motivates activism, and it is our learning and understanding of others' embeddedness that can guide our discourse with them across epistemological and ontological borders.

Perhaps the greatest contribution to rhetoric from Ancient Greece has been that of Aristotle. Aristotle's treatises on rhetorical discourse are still used to this date in Western education and practice. His focus on ethical discourse and the blending of rhetoric, politics and ethics situates rhetoric in the civic arena. Aristotle defines rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (Aristotle, 350 B.C.; Roberts, 2001, p. 181), which emphasizes the element of invention in the rhetorical canon. He also lays emphasis on

logos - the evidence or the factual basis of any of the claims that the rhetorician might employ in his case, ethos - the character of the rhetorician and the credibility of his speech, and pathos - the use of emotionally relevant value judgements that can persuade the listeners to attend to a particular case.

Aristotle's notion of rhetoric points to the collective decision-making of publics as well as the fostering of enlightened choice through the coming together of different perspectives and viewpoints in the public arena. Additionally, rhetoric is concerned with the ethical dimension. For him, virtue is a state of character concerned with the choice of the mean between excess and deficiency.

In addition to the above, Heath (2009) argues that Aristotle's treatise on rhetoric has an emphasis on a two-way symmetrical model of public relations, as he advocated for the contestation of ideas in public, where arguments are analyzed by anyone within the general public. The very act of truth-seeking publicly allowed for the open exchange of ideas between parties, where the interests of all communicative actors were met, and the outcome of such communication was achieved through deliberative discourse and collaborative decision-making. In the rhetorical model of public relations as well as integrated marketing communication (Schutz &Schutz, 2004; Schultz, 2004), there is an overwhelming emphasis on the importance of the audience, collaborative decision-making and co-created meaning.

Quintilian's definition of rhetoric as the good man speaking well (Quintilian, 95; Watson, 2001) is pertinent to the rhetorical model of public relations, as Heath (2009) describes "the paradigm for public relations as the good organization communicating well" (p. 32). Quintilian's emphasis on both the character of the rhetorician and the effectiveness of his speech is echoed by Heath's highlighting of organizations with a moral compass as well as excellent communication

fostered by their public relations departments. This demonstrates a commitment to communication that demonstrates the excellence of the character of the organization as well as its bent toward higher standards and values that can benefit the larger community rather than only the organization's self-interests.

Taking all of the above treatises on rhetoric, we can determine that good rhetoric is dialogic, invitational, advisory, propositional and participatory in nature. The rhetorical nature of discourse in public relations serves to encourage enlightened choice through the contestation of various ideas in the public sphere; seeks the wider interest of the publics as well as the interests of the organization engaged in public relations efforts; is based on facts and evidence for the various choices recommended; invites people into the conversation through the use of invitational rhetoric and identification; and builds identifications with various publics through the sharing of common ground and the social construction of meaning (Heath, 2009). Van Ruler and Heath (2008) point out that the essence of the rhetorical model of public relations is that it leads to co-created meaning, collaborative decision-making and identification.

In the strategies listed above, co-created meaning refers to the interactive relationships between the speaker and the publics. The rhetorical model of public relations allows for insights into how meaning is crafted in the public sphere, how ideas are enlivened and framed, and the rich connections between the meanings of the actions of organizations in conjunction with those of other organizations or publics. These meaning-making actions of organizations foster harmonious and mutually beneficial relationships in the marketplace of ideas through discourse. Razeghi and Calder (2003), in an evaluation of brand experiences, posit that a brand is constructed by the consumer's experience and not just by the marketing decisions made by a company. Meaning of the brand to the consumer is created, therefore, in the way the consumer

interacts with the brand as well as the various messaging points of the speaking organization. Similarly, Fortini-Campbell (2001) argues that brand meaning is derived from the entire product or service offering, not just marketing messages, and thus it provides a way to look at the way publics interact with brands in a holistic way. Co-created value is seen in the personalized, unique experiences of the consumers with the product or service proposition. If we understand brand-building and marketing communication as rhetorical discourse, we can conclude that meaning in public relations discourse is therefore created and interpreted by the way publics actually experience messages as well as the messages as intended by the rhetorician.

The second strategy identified by van Ruler and Heath (2008) in relation to the rhetorical model of public relations is an emphasis on collaborative decision-making. Collaborative decision-making is the integration of interests and ideas both within the organization and outside of it with various publics. Alignment of the values of the organization and its publics has been advocated by public relations professionals since the infancy of the profession. Bernays (1928) states that the ideal of public relations is to make the organization "understand what the public wants, and to make the public understand the objectives of the [organization]. In relation to industry, the ideal of the profession is to eliminate the waste and the friction of that result when industry does things or makes things which its public does not want, or when the public does not understand what is being offered it." (p. 69). Understanding the wants, needs and interest of the publics is extremely important in public relations practice, and so is aligning the needs, wants and interests of the organization to its publics.

The theories of integrated marketing communication also advance the need for a consensus on corporate objectives within the organization as well as outside of it. By understanding integrated marketing communication as a management function (Schutz & Schutz,

2004), the theory suggests that the integration of marketing messages should occur throughout the organization as well as with the values and interests of its publics. Schultz & Schultz point to the convergence, consistency and coordination of marketing messages as the way to achieve integration and collaborative decision-making within an organization. A shift in the marketplace power from manufacturers of products to retailers and distributers to now the consumers (Schultz, 2003) also places demands on marketers and public relations professionals to place the consumer in the center in their marketing decisions.

The third strategy identified by van Ruler and Heath (2008) in the rhetorical model of public relations is identification. Identification works on the premise of creating shared similarities, meaning and common ground between the organization and its publics. Heath (2009) states that identification works by using rhetoric as 'courtship' to invite the publics to identify with the key terms, points of view, products or services, causes, and policies of an organization. Burke's (1969) understanding of rhetoric as courtship underlies Heath's invitational form of rhetorical public relations. According to Burke, humans desire identification, and the use of words, especially idioms, is inherent to creating identification within the minds of publics. Burke states that "identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division" (p. 208). Identification becomes possible through the use of terms used by rhetoricians to define and name themselves and their causes and people identify with others and various causes to satisfy their need to be part of a collective.

The most obvious case of associating the interests of the speaker and the audience, according to Burke (1969), is explicit, when "a speaker persuades an audience by the use of stylistic identifications; his act of persuasion may be for the purpose of causing the audience to identify itself with the speaker's interests" (p. 46). Two other more subtle forms of identification

are explored by Cheney (1983): identification by antithesis, or "disassociation", where the speaker seeks identification with the audience by contrasting their position against a common "other"; and identification by an 'assumed we', where the speaker and the audience do not share much in common, but the use of words such as 'us' and 'we' promote an assumed common ground.

In using the rhetorical model of public relations (van Ruler & Heath, 2008), four things matter: (i) the character or ethical integrity of the speaking organization; (ii) the message or the kinds of statements made; (iii) the audience: attentiveness to their situation and care for their interests in alignment with the interests of the organization; and (iv) the purposefulness of the communicative messages or a true effort to achieve and reveal good character through discourse.

However, when it comes to the application of the rhetorical model of public relations, L'Etang (2010) offers some caution with its use. Since rhetoric is historically concerned with issues of truth, knowledge and ethics, defining the notion of these elements in transnational or intercultural contexts is especially complex as epistemologies of knowledge are culturally, socially and geographically constructed. L'Etang states that "the fracture between those holding relativist and universal epistemological positions is reflected in fault lines within the public relations discipline" (p. 148). One of the problems faced by practitioners in the area of transnational public relations is the application of universalized frameworks on a multiplicity of particular cultural perspectives. Lee (2001) offers reconciliation between universalism and pluralism by referencing Schrag's (1989) notion of transversality. The "transversal logos of communication" (Schrag, 1992, p. 170) is attentive to differences across which communication can take place. Transversality recognizes particularity as well as diversity. It is a meeting point of modernity and postmodernity and lies between the universal and the particular (Schrag, 1986).

For Schrag, transversality and communicative praxis are firmly grounded in world oriented experience as humans are communicatively situated in the world around them. It is through attending to the particular while remaining cognizant of the diversity of worldviews that publics can identify with each other and engage in enlightened choice through the use of rhetoric.

In cases of social movements and activism, Choudry and Kapoor (2010) mention that knowledge related to power structures, ideologies, and visions of social change emerges due to activist movements in particular spaces. Specifically important to this project, the scholarship of Mignolo (2000) examines the relationship between epistemologies of knowledge, colonialism and imperialism, and cautions against applying Western theories and concepts to Third World and indigenous communities. He advocates for 'border thinking', an epistemic shift in the study of the modern colonial world where scholars work on the borders of the imperial and colonial notions of thinking and knowing as the dwelling place of understanding to emerge between the two. Mignolo states that border thinking makes space for knowing the postcolonial ethos without occidental perspectives overshadowing the effort. Smith (2006) and Kinsman (2006) urge activists and researchers to go beyond theoretical approaches and attend to the actual pragmatic social practices and grassroots organization in working with social justice activism. It therefore becomes necessary to attend to the notion of place in order to contextualize the specifics of knowledge production and meaning-making when it comes to rhetorical discourse in transnational public relations.

Intersubjectivity and a Culture-Centered Approach

The rhetorical model of public relations examined in the last section does not presuppose a civil society construct or a democratic ideal like Taylor (2009; 2010) does in her work. My work in this chapter shows that the rhetorical model of public relations can be applied sans

democratic and social ideals in postcolonial nations when rhetoricians are attentive to the realities of such social and political structures. In this endeavor, Dutta's (2011) culture-centered approach adds a rich texture to applying rhetorical public relations in postcolonial nations.

Dutta's (2009, 2011) work advocates the use of a culture-centered approach informed by postcolonial theory and subaltern studies. Culture plays an important role in public relations (Verčič, Grunig & Grunig, 1993). Hall (1959) posits that culture is manifested discursively among individuals. In fact, he states, "culture is communication and communication is culture" (p. 191). Since public relations is primarily a communicative activity (Sriramesh & White, 1992), it also has to deal with issues of culture and identity. However culture is made up of many aspects and ideological bases. Hofstede (1980) defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another [and influences] a human group's response to its environment" (p. 25). In order to effectively practice public relations across borders and across cultures, one should be attuned to the cultural nuances inherent in society.

For communicating social change, Dutta (2011) states that it is important to engage with the marginalized people of contemporary society that have been systematically silenced or erased from dominant discursive spaces of knowledge production. His culture-centered approach is a framework for including marginalized and subaltern voices in the conversations of social change that are meaningful to them. In communicating social change through the culture-centered approach, there is a departure from the accepted or primary hierarchical formations of society as well as challenges to the concentrations of power, hegemony and areas of knowledge production. In this way, the culture-centered approach can be seen as a rhetorical intervention to the historical conversations or norms of societal structure.

The culture-centered approach is built upon the foundations of postcolonial theory (Spivak, 1994) that opposes current global hegemonic structures and marginalization processes. It focuses on creating authentic dialogic (Buber, 1970) possibilities by engaging the voices of the subaltern and marginalized at their particular position and circumstance. It recognizes the agency of the subaltern to transform the power structures in society that have marginalized them, and seeks to create entry points for true dialogic exchanges. It does not operate in a top-down heroic position that seeks to save the subaltern, but instead recognizes their own indigenous power, knowledge, and agency.

Considering the inadequacy of achieving the two-way symmetrical model of public relations as a way to achieve dialogic communication pointed out above, perhaps Habermas' (1984; 1987) theory of communicative action can prove to be a starting point. Habermas' idea of communicative action is "one in which actors in society seek to reach common understanding and to coordinate actions by reasoned argument, consensus, and cooperation rather than strategic action strictly in pursuit of their own goals" (Habermas, 1984, p. 86). Communicative action is based on public participation, sharing of information with the public and reaching of consensus through public dialogue. Habermas considers all moral action as communicative and promotes dialogic communication as essential to understanding. Habermas (1987) states that communicative action is the most fundamental aspect of the lifeworld and it is through communicative action in a societal construct that people can make meaning and achieve mutual understanding through rhetorical discourse. Dutta's (2011) emphasis on entry points for dialogue to occur with the marginalized can thus be rooted in communicative action that attempts to be free from the colonization of the lifeworld by systems and theories that might not reflect the lived experience of the subaltern.

In order to understand the lifeworld and lived experience of the subaltern and marginalized, it is also important to let them tell their own stories (Spivak, 1994). It is by means of communicative action that culture, society, and personality are constructed and reconstructed. While communicative action is a necessary condition for making societies and polities viable, Habermas (1987) declares that it is narrative that makes self-understanding and social integration possible. Narrative not only serves smaller needs for mutual understanding among members of a society, it also plays an important role in the self-understanding of people. They see themselves as part of a narrative, as participants in communication, belonging to the lifeworld. Their personal identities are dependent on the recognition that their actions form narrative life histories. Their memberships in social groups are dependent upon the recognition that they maintain their memberships in social groups by way of participating in interactions, and thus that they are part of the narrative histories of various collectivities (Habermas, 1987). It is important to be attentive to personal as well as collective narratives of different cultures and places in order to communicate transnationally.

A hermeneutic of the self (Ricoeur, 1975) helps in understanding the way we, as humans, make our lives intelligible to us and develop our notions of identity and belonging in the lifeworld communicatively. Narratives, according to Ricoeur, provide a way that language can be used creatively to make sense of issues of identity and agency. Through narratives, the individual can come to understand herself as an agent responsible for her own actions in the world. Narratives also help us come to an understanding about our place in the world and our relationships with the narratives of others within that world. The power of speech or rhetoric lies in shaping how people think of themselves as communicative actors, especially in the midst of historically marginalized communities. The culture-centered approach (Dutta, 2011) works by

creating co-constructive possibilities for listening to the voices of the marginalized and brings the stories of the voiceless to light in an effort to transform the dominant power structures in society. In this way, it recognizes the centrality and importance of language in intersubjective understanding as well as understanding of the self.

Understanding the historical context is also important in making meaning with regard to the lived reality of the marginalized. Philosophical hermeneutics encourages the uniting of three coordinates--the interpreter, the text, and the historical moment--in dialogue (Arnett & Holba, 2012). A constructive hermeneutic approach to transnational communication can be possible if practitioners focus on the interpretation of particular lived experiences and narratives of participants on their own merit. By understanding their biases and limitations, public relations practitioners can attend to the conversation with respectful interpretive engagement (Arnett & Holba, 2012). Attentiveness to the embeddedness of both the subject and the interpreter within their own cultural milieu is necessary to try to bridge the horizons (Gadamer, 2004) between conversational partners coming from different places.

Since rhetorically salient meanings may emerge in different ways in different places, transnational public relations needs to focus on knowing the "Other" and finding places of intersubjective meaning-making as well as being attuned to cultural biases and difference. In order to produce awareness and public opinion of shared interests, transnational public relations practitioners need to presuppose a postmodern shared reference world (Taylor, 1971) that encompasses difference. Similarly, allowing a culture-centered approach (Dutta, 2011), postcolonial theory and subaltern studies to inform transnational public relations can be helpful in reimagining the relationship between structural inequalities and possibilities of representation of the marginalized.

Interconnectivity and Relationship-Building Strategy

One of the strategies that can be helpful in the practice of transnational public relations is focus on the networks of society and using them in a favorable way to disseminate information and build mutually beneficial relationships. The ideas of interconnectivity and relationship-building relate to the organization of societal structures, and how transnational public relations can use these structures to its benefit, especially in postcolonial and collectivistic nations. In this section, I will primarily refer to the work of Bernays (2004; 2011) and Grunig, et. al. (1995) to describe social interconnectivity and particular strategies that can be useful for transnational public relations.

Public relations, according to Edward Bernays, is "a consisting, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of the public to an enterprise, idea or group" (Bernays, 2004, p. 52). From this definition, it is apparent that Bernays thinks of public relations as an art of interpretation of various events, ideas or groups as the public relations professional is the one who is the link between events or ideas and the public he tends to influence. Public relations, according to Bernays, is about giving direction to ideas or "regimenting the public mind" (Bernays, 2004, p. 52).

Bernays' idea of public relations practitioners then is the link between the idea and the public. The public relations professional is the one who frames or gives direction to the ideas in the public mind. He defines the public relations counsel as, "the agent who, working with the modern media of communications and the group formations of society, brings an idea to the consciousness of the public" (Bernays, 2004, p. 64). The public relations practitioner seeks to create public acceptance for a particular idea. He organizes and focuses the messages that reach the public. He is the one who "interprets the client to the public, which he is enabled to do in part

because he interprets the public to the client" (Bernays, 2011, p. 51). Thus, the public relations practitioner, according to Bernays, is the essential connection between the public and the client.

In defining the characteristics of the field of public relations and role of the public relations professional further, Bernays is very clear about the fact that one cannot "attempt to sell an idea…that is basically unsound" (2004, p.65). Therefore, the first task of the public relations practitioner is to ensure that the idea or product that he is working on behalf of is something that is ethically sound and ought to be accepted by the public. In fact, Bernays says that one should "refuse a client whom [the public relations professional] believes to be dishonest, a product which he believes to be fraudulent, or a cause which he believes to be antisocial" (Bernays, 2004, p. 69).

While Bernays' theory contains many interesting parts within it, this project is concerned primarily with his discussion of networks as the channels through which the public can be reached while practicing public relations. Bernays believes that the populace is made up of thousands of groups, at the local, community, state or even national level. The individual is a member of various groups and he gets valuable information from the members and leaders of the groups that he belongs to. For example, Bernays writes,

> Ideas are sifted and opinions stereotyped in the neighborhood bridge club. Leaders assert their authority through community drives and amateur theatricals. Thousands of women may unconsciously belong to a sorority which follows the fashion set by a single society leader" (2004, p. 43)

Not only are groups areas where members can get new information, but it is also important to note that the leaders of these groups have uncommon, sometimes absolute influence over the members that belong to their group and thus are powerful individuals that should be

courted by the public relations professional as the channel through which the ideas of the client can be circulated though the public. Berry and Keller (2003) call these group leaders 'influentials'.

Related to the idea of groups is the notion of networks. The groups that the populace is made up of interlace, that is, one particular individual may belong to a number of groups. Through his membership in various groups, he will carry the ideas he receives from the leaders and members of one group to the members of another group. This invisible, intertwining structure of groupings and associations is the mechanism by which messages can be dispersed. Through these networks and relationships, ideas can be disseminated to the public through targeting various individuals that are at the nodes of various groups and who hold influence and power in their various sets. This idea of targeting the 'influentials' is of import even in the current day and age (Berry and Keller, 2003; Gladwell, 2002) with integrated marketing communication practitioners.

Similar to the strategy proposed by Bernays, in the personal influence model proposed by Grunig, et. al. (1995), public relations practitioners try to establish personal relationships with key individuals in various societal networks. The goal is to build a lasting relationship with these leaders of influence, who can then be encouraged to disseminate information or persuade the larger publics of the cause the practitioner is advocating. Often these individuals with whom personal relationships are sought are the elite of society who hold power and influence with either the ruling classes or the various publics that the public relations practitioner seeks to influence. Since the personal influence model employs interpersonal communication practices, Toth (2000) believes it could be more aptly called the "individual influence model" since the power of personal influence lies in the status, trustworthiness, and credibility of the individual.

However, Grunig, et. al. (1995) advocate caution in the use of the personal influence model, as the results of their studies showed that practices can sometimes lead to unethical behaviors. In Taiwan and Greece, for example, public relations practitioners used monetary payments or bribes to enjoy the favor of the leaders of influence or to get them to further their cause. Milder practices included gifts or provision of food or drink to curry favor. Transnational public relations practice needs to be wary of such unethical practices in nations where such dealings might be *de rigueur*.

Another model proposed by Grunig, et. al. (1995), the cultural interpreter model might also prove useful for transnational public relations practice. In public relations practices in Greece, the authors found that in "multinational companies in which the CEO was a foreigner and depended on native Greeks for input about the country's culture and politics" (p. 181), the indigenous people acted as cultural interpreters to public relations practitioners. The role of the natives was one of a consultant that could make meaning of the cultural practices unique to the places in which the organizations operated.

In postcolonial nations, while negotiating through the dominant structures of society in aid of the marginalized, it is necessary to employ the interconnected networks of society and build relationships with influential leaders or native sources. Issues of power and culture (Foucault, 1980) have been generating societal inequalities historically, having the effect of silencing the subaltern. Since the subaltern does not have any recourse to subverting these inequalities as she is not heard within the dominant discourses even if she speaks, transnational public relations practices employed by activist organizations need to make use of the existing structures to make space for the possibilities of speech for the subaltern (Dutta, 2011). Recognizing the people who hold power in these societies and communicating with them ensures

that the important messages can be heard and disseminated in service of the overall goal to be accomplished, which is to make space for the marginalized within the public sphere.

Conclusion

Responding to Wakefield's (1996) call for theory-building in transnational public relations, I attempt to assess theories from related disciplines that can help in laying a ground for the emergence of the theory and practice of transnational public relations in this chapter. Theoretical foundations have been sought from various fields of study, namely, rhetoric, intercultural communication, phenomenological hermeneutics, philosophy of communication, marketing communication and public relations.

Starting with the rhetorical model of public relations proposed by Heath (2009), the importance of engaging the marginalized in dialogue is emphasized. Co-creation of meaning, collaborative decision-making and identification have been identified by van Ruler and Heath (2008) as the three strategies that can be used to recognize the agency of the subaltern and to value their voice and contribution to the conversation.

One of the important coordinates in the rhetorical model of public relations is the place of the audience in the communicative act. In transnational public relations, an audience-centric approach becomes especially necessary as the communicative actors need to connect in the face of differences of culture, nationality and religion. In the work of Spivak (1994) and Dutta (2001), respect for the Other in the case of communicating with subaltern voices is an essential part of providing a space for communication to occur on an equal plane. Equality supposes dialogic communication, where communicative actors need to engage in dialogue in order to form an authentic relationship with the Other (Buber, 1970). Dialogic cosmopolitanism's four central themes, "a respect for difference; a commitment to dialogue; an open, hesitant and self-

problematizing attitude on the part of the moral subject; and an undertaking to expand the boundaries of moral concern to the point of universal inclusion" (Jordaan, 2009, p. 736) are touchpoints in situating dialogue in a postcolonial space.

Emphasis on narrative and various linguistic techniques like the use of metaphor (Ricoeur, 1975) and identification (Burke, 1969) can also help the practice of transnational public relations. Understanding the lifeworld and lived experience (Habermas, 1984, 1987) of communicative partners becomes essential when it comes to navigating difference both across cultures and within societal structures in these Other nations. Practitioners of transnational public relations should focus on learning and gaining knowledge of the Other to find commonplaces of intersubjective meaning-making.

Practicing public relations communication in a postcolonial nation would also employ the necessity of situating the communication in the language and spaces that are culturally accepted. The immersion of Western communicative actors and messages into the postcolonial or subaltern ethos is necessary. In order for the subaltern to truly express themselves, the ways of perceiving their world, their ways of thinking and knowing (Spivak, 1994) and being have to be engaged by the public relations practitioners. A culture-centered approach (Dutta, 2001) based on theories of postcolonial studies and subaltern studies can prove useful in negotiating alterity and difference.

Finally, navigating the issues of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1980) within a culture becomes important in transnational public relations in postcolonial spaces. It is important to recognize the leaders of influence (Bernays, 2004; Keller & Berry, 2003) who hold power and authority within a society. Recognizing the networks within these societies is crucial in order to start communicating with the influentials within these societies, and making your message heard in the places that matter. The personal influence model proposed by Grunig, et. al. (1995) can be

a valuable strategic resource in practicing transnational public relations in cultures that have a high power difference between different communicative actors in society.

Chapter Six - Activist Transnational Public Relations - The Case of WISE in Afghanistan

> …we remain caged in our country, without access to justice and still ruled by women-hating criminals. Fundamentalists still preach that 'a woman should be in her house or in the grave' (Joya, 2011, p. 3).

Introduction

Transnational public relations is a public communicative act that takes places across borders and furthers communication about particular interests to and between publics and organizations for the mutual benefit of both. Activist public relations (Smith & Ferguson, 2010) deals with advocacy and promotion of particular sociopolitical issues in the world. Activist public relations might be practiced by individuals, interest groups, civic associations, and nongovernmental organizations in the pursuit of affecting sociopolitical change using rhetorical and cultural material available to them (Castells, 2008). By using public relations strategies, engaging in social justice causes across nations and borders is a delicate affair as it requires an understanding of various cultural, societal, communicative and religious norms. Tromble & Wouters, however, offer hope for "genuine transnational engagement" (2015, p. 373) when people reach across national boundaries across differences to form transnational public spheres.

Therefore, theory-building in transnational public relations looks at various disciplines in order to generate an understanding of rhetoric and the use of dialogic communication to bridge the gaps of communication and meaning among differently situated people. The rhetorical model of public relations proposed by Heath (2009) was examined in the previous chapter as a way to

communicate effectively across national and cultural boundaries. Additionally, postcolonial theory from Spivak (1994) and the culture-centered approach advocated by Dutta (2009; 2011) were determined as having a valuable role to play when understanding various communicative actors in postcolonial nations. Philosophical hermeneutics and Habermas' communicative action (1984; 1987) have also been studied in chapter five as beneficial to the theory and practice of transnational public relations. Finally, relationship building and the personal influence model of public relations (Grunig, et. al., 1995) remain essential resources and strategies to be applied by the transnational public relations practitioner working in nations that are high context and collectivistic cultures (Hall, 1959).

While the previous chapter focused on theory-building, this chapter focuses on studying the application of transnational public relations activism by nongovernmental organizations that attempt to make a space for women in the public sphere in Afghanistan. Working within but against the constraints of a patriarchal culture that marginalizes them (Benard, 2002; Emadi, 2002; Skaine, 2002), nongovernmental organizations like the American Society for Muslim Advancement's subsidiary, Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality, and an Afghan organization, Noor Educational and Capacity Development Organization (NECDO), work for women's rights and social justice in Afghanistan (WISE, 2016).

This chapter looks first at the various sects of Islam and the political, social and cultural history of Afghanistan in order to situate the communication challenges and subsequent efforts made by these nongovernmental organizations within an Islamic Afghani society. Then, the philosophy and strategies of WISE's *imam* training program and *Shura* Council are explored, and finally, the theories and strategies of transnational public relations covered in the last chapter are

evaluated within the work of the organizational actors to discern how they have been applied in transnational public relations efforts of WISE and NECDO.

The Multiplicities of the Various Sects of Islam

Islam originated in the seventh century in Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia. The rise of Islam coincided with Late Antiquity (Robinson, 2010). Muhammad, the prophet of the religion, was born in Mecca in 570 A.D. He belonged to the Arabic tribe Quraysh. When he was about 40 years old, he began receiving divine revelation through the angel Gabriel, which would constitute the Quran and form the religion of Islam. While in the early years Muhammad and the new faith was met with opposition from social and political leaders, he had a few followers that grew with the years (Buhl, et. al., 2012). He was initially protected from persecution by his uncle Abu Talib, one of the Quraysh leaders who was not a follower of the new faith but offered protection to his nephew. After Abu Talib's death, Muhammad and his followers fled to Yathrib (the earlier name for the city of Medina) in 618 A.D. (Robinson, 2010).

In Yathrib, Muhammad began laying in place a new Islamic society based on legal and religious doctrine that was revealed to him in the Quran. Due to war breaking out between the tribes of Mecca and the new followers in Medina, the early Muslims fought many wars with Mecca and eventually gained control of Mecca and the allegiance of the Quraysh in 629 A. D. From then until Muhammad's death in 632 A.D., he established peace treaties with other tribal chiefs in the Arabian Peninsula and gained in followers to the Islamic faith (Hourani, 2002).

The new religion brought considerable social changes with it. Lewis (2002) states that the egalitarian nature of the Islamic doctrine paved the way for the religion to succeed as it had. He says that Islamic laws and religious doctrine provided better social security, denounced aristocratic privilege, rejected hierarchy, and catered to rights of slaves and women, all of which

had been absent in existing Arab society. Muhammad also condemned practices of pagan Arab tribes of the time like female infanticide, exploitation of the poor, usury, adultery and criminal acts such as murder and theft. In relation to women's rights, Islam reformed the laws of marriage, divorce and inheritance, according women a legal status that had been denied them in pre-Islamic Arab society (Esposito, 1988).

Haddad & Esposito (2004) state that the low status of women in certain Islamic traditions is due to the interpretation of jurists, the effect of local customs and traditions, and other social trends rather than the Quran-granted rights and privileges taught by Muhammad. Preexisting conditions in the societies in which Islam spread led to the mixing of Islamic doctrine with local traditions and customs. Additionally, as we will see later on in this historical overview, the interpretation of the Quran by various scholars also led to a conservative bias to the legal and religious doctrine that was followed in later periods.

After the death of Muhammad in 632 A.D., the Islamic state was governed by the four Rashidun caliphs: Abu Bakr, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Uthman bin Affan and Ali ibn Abi Talib (Madelung, 1998). The caliphate was an office that proclaimed a religious authority on the office-holder, but not prophecy (Hourani, 2002). The caliphs were leaders of the *umma* or the community of believers of the Islamic faith. During the rule of the four Rashidun caliphs, problems of rightful succession during the election of Abu Bakr, the assassination of Umar, charges of corruption and nepotism against Uthman and his subsequent assassination, and a major split between the fourth caliph and the prophet's wife Aisha were the major issues regarding the early leadership of the religion (Madelung, 1988). The Islamic state, at the end of the rule of the four Rashidun caliphs, extended to the Byzantine Empire's provinces Syria and

Egypt and the Sassanid Empire's provinces Bactria, Persia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Caucasus and Makran (Hourani, 2002).

The succession to Muhammad was an important series of events in the history of Islam, one which eventually led to the Sunni-Shia split. Madelung (1988) writes,

> For Sunnites, the first caliph, Abu Bakr, was the only rightful successor since he was the most excellent of men after the prophet. Although Muhammad had not explicitly appointed him as his successor, his preference for him was indicated by his order for Abu Bakr to lead the Muslims in prayers during his final illness. The consensus reached by the Muslims in favor of Abu Bakr merely confirmed what was ultimately God's choice. For Shi'ites it was Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib who, on account of his merits in Islam as well as his close kinship, has been appointed by the prophet as his successor (p.1).

However, Madelung (1988) points out that the actual spilt between the factions and the issues with succession did not occur during the Rashidun caliphate, as Ali ibn Abi Talib himself voluntarily and eagerly offered his pledge of allegiance to Abu Bakr's caliphate.

Various accounts differ on the dating of the agitation about Ali's 'rightful' succession to caliphate. Some accounts point to outcries against the third caliph, Uthman, and still others state that the conflict was created by the Shia after the death of Ali and was counter to his attitude toward and acceptance of the Rashidun caliphate. The concept of the *ahl-al-bayt* al Muhammad / *ahl-al-nabt* (Family of the Prophet) did not exist during Muhammad's time nor during the reign of the Rashidun caliphs. It was during the Umayyad and Abbasid reigns that the term and concept gained currency to legitimize the hereditary rights of men to lead the Islamic state (Madelung, 1988).

Shia Islam is the second-largest branch of Islam. Though Shia Islam has been divided into many sects, the main ones are the Twelvers, Zaidis (Fivers), and the Islmailis (Seveners). The Twelvers believe in twelve divinely ordained leaders or *Imams*. It is currently practiced by the majority of Iran, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Iraq and Lebanon. Zaidism is the second largest branch and is followed primarily in Yemen. Ismailis, the third largest branch of Shi'ites, are largely concentrated in India and Iran (Halm, 2001). While the history of Islam lays out the splitting of the religion into many factions and sects, for the purposes of this project and in service of understanding the particular circumstances prevalent in Afghan society I will only trace the history of political and legal Islam through the Sunni schools of thought.

After the leadership of the Rashidun caliphs, the establishment of the Umayyad dynasty came through the rise of Marwan I and Muawiyah I. In 639, Muawiyah I was appointed as the governor of Syria by Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph. During the caliphate of Uthman ibn Affan, Marwan I, a relative of Muawiyah I, gained unofficial control of the religious leadership due to the failing health of Uthman. After Uthman's assassination in 656 A.D., Muawiyah I and Marwan I joined forces to create conflict that resulted in the first civil war that ended with the overthrowing of the Rashidun caliphs and led to the establishment of the Umayyad dynasty. Muawiyah I was acknowledged as the first Umayyad caliph (Madelung, 1988).

The Umayyad dynasty ruled from 661-750 A.D., with Damascus as its capital. Under the Umayyad caliphate, the empire stretched from the Iberian Peninsula in the west to the Indus Valley in the east. The Umayyads were defeated by the Abbasid dynasty in 750 A.D. and the capital of the caliphate was shifted to Baghdad (Madelung, 1988). The reign of the Abbasids is termed as the "golden age of Islam" (Holt, Lambton & Lewis, 1977, p. 661) - they ruled from

750-1258 A.D. The geographical expansion of the Islamic caliphate during the Umayyad and Abbasid rulers led to the move to codify Islamic laws and religious doctrine and consolidate the Islamic faith in order to acknowledge the customs of the places that were conquered. This led to the establishment of the four *Madhabs* or schools of law within Islam (Madelung, 1988).

The major *Madhabs* that gained recognition within Sunni Islam were Maliki, named after Malik ibn Anas; Hanafi, named after Abu Hanifah; Shafi'i, named after Muhammad bin Idris al-Shafi'i; and Hanbali, named after Ahmad bin Hanbal (Melchert, 1997). Each of these four schools practice and interpret religious law (*sharia*) differently within the Sunni tradition (Lapidus, 2002).

The Maliki School of jurisprudence was formed in the eighth century by Malik ibn Anas. It relies on the Quran and *hadith* as its primary sources to derive religious law. Being a native of Medina, Malik ibn Anas also based his jurisprudence on *'Amal* or the customs and practices of the people of Medina, as he considered them living proof of the living *Sunnah* (practices of Muhammad). Whenever the Quran, *hadith* and the *'amal* do not provide clear guidance, the Maliki school derives its rulings from pragmatic *istislah* (public interest). The Maliki School enjoyed the favor of the Umayyads, and legitimized their power and authority in return. Currently it is followed by Muslims in North and West African countries, and a few Middle Eastern countries like Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE and northern parts of Saudi Arabia (Haddad, 2007).

The Maliki School differs from other schools in the Sunni tradition in the form of sources it uses for the interpretation and derivation of *sharia*. The Maliki School uses the Quran as its primary source, followed by the *hadith*, which (in the Maliki School) includes within it the legal rulings of the Rashidun caliphs. The *'amal* when drawn from the first, second or third

generations of the inhabitants of Medina were also considered valid sources of law when the previous two sources prove ambiguous (Kamali, 2003).

The Hanafi School of jurisprudence was established in Iraq, as the fourth Rashidun caliph, Ali, had transferred the Islamic capital there. Many of the first generation Muslims had settled there, and the school rose out of the Islamic traditions as transmitted by these *Sahaba* (as companions of Mohammad are called). In earlier times, the Hanafi School was known as the Kufan School or the Iraqi school after its place of origin (Haddad, 2007).

The jurisprudence of the Hanafi School was compiled and documented only in the eleventh century. It enjoyed the favor of the Turkish rulers, Abbasids, Seljuks and the Ottomans, and then followed the Turkish expansions into Central Asia and gained favor in the lands into northwest China and South Asia through the rule of the Timurid Dynasty, Khanates and Delhi Sultanate. Currently, the Hanafi School is the one most widely followed by Muslims around the world. It is prevalent in the regions that stretch from Turkey in the west to China in the east (Haddad, 2007).

The sources on which the Hanafi school's jurisprudence is based are, in order of importance: the Quran, the *hadith*, consensus of the *Sahabas*, individual opinion from the *Sahaba*, *Qiyas* (analogy), *Ihtihsan* (juristic preference), and finally, local custom of the people where the law is to be interpreted. The Hanafi school was the first to adopt *Qiyas* or analogy to interpret Islamic law when the Quran and *hadith* did not prove a clear ruling (Kamali, 2003). Lapidus (2002) states that since the Hanafi school originated in a more cosmopolitan place than the origin of the Maliki school in Medina, Hanafi jurisprudence was more flexible in nature than the textually rigorous and traditionalist Maliki jurisprudence.

The Shafi'i school was founded in the early ninth century and was the most followed school in the early history of Islam. However, due to the patronage of the Ottoman Empire to the Hanafi School, it descended in stature. The Shafi'i school is now followed in parts of the African continent, the Kurdish regions of the Middle East, some regions of the Caucasus, and parts of South and Southeast Asia (Haddad, 2007).

The Shafi'i school follows five sources of jurisprudence, in the following order: the Quran, the *hadith*, consensus of the *Sahaba*, opinions of the *Sahaba*, and *Qiyas* (analogy). The main difference between the Hanafi and Shafi'i schools is that while Hanafis employ *Ihtihsan* (juristic preference), the Shafi'i school doesn't, saying that the method relies on human preference and hence has the possibility of corruption of the Islamic principles of religious law (Kamali, 2003).

The fourth school of jurisprudence in the Sunni tradition is Hanbali, the smallest and the strictest of the four major Sunni schools. It was founded in Saudi Arabia and Qatar, where it is still prevalent. The Hanbali School is also followed among other countries in the Middle Eastern region. The founder of the Hanbali School, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, was a student of Al-Shafi'i, he founder of the Shafi'i school, and like him was concerned about the individual interpretations that jurists were ascribing to religious law to please those in power (Haddad, 2007). Therefore, he advocated a return to the Quran and the *hadith* and decreed the literal or apparent meaning of these scriptures to be the only legitimate source of Islamic jurisprudence, leaving no space for rational disputation, juristic interpretation, metaphorical interpretation or contextualization of the meaning of Quranic verses (Kamali, 2003).

The Hanbali School was the forerunner of the Wahhabi and Salafi movements in the Middle East and North Africa in the current times. With the rise of the al Saud family's rule in

Saudi Arabia, Hanbalis gained prominence and support and a more strict interpretation of Islamic doctrine gained currency in the Arabian peninsula, and from there to other parts of the world (Fadl, 2007). The Wahhabi doctrine in particular provided inspiration to "militant religious extremism in movements ranging from the Taliban of Afghanistan to the so-called Wahhabis of Central Asia and Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network" (Delong-Bas, 2007, p. 3).

Delong-Bas (2007) argues that the Wahhabism that was founded in the eighteenth century in central Arabia by Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab bears little resemblance to what its followers and adherents have turned it into in the pursuit of a political and military extremist position. Nevertheless, the intolerant doctrines of the self-described Wahhabi and Salafi followers have tried to force their vision of Islam through violence and terror on the world (Fadl, 2007) through various Islamist terrorist groups.

Marshall (2005) states that the goal of Islamist terrorist groups is "the restoration of a unified worldwide Muslim political community, the *ummah*, ruled by a centralized Islamic authority, the caliphate, governed by a reactionary version of Islamic law, *sharia*, and organized to wage war, *jihad*, on the rest of the world" (p. xi). He traces the beginning of extremist Islam to the formal ending of Turkey' last regime by Ataturk, as Turkey's Islamic state was considered the inheritor of the caliphate and a proper ruler over the Muslim world. Marshall also mentions that Osama bin Laden said in one of his recorded video messages that after the end of Turkey as an Islamic state, there was no other powerful state that could rule over all of the world's Muslim population. With the ending of Turkey's regime, the principle of the Islamic state ended as well. And so various Islamist organizations have been trying to restore a world order where there can once again be a caliphate.

Additionally, Marshall (2005) states that Islam had been defeated politically in a lot of the world's nations as well. Following World War I and by the first decades of the twentieth century, there were only four powerful Muslim nations - Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia. Marshall quotes Osama bin Laden's November 3, 2001 video broadcast to this effect, wherein he says, "Following World War I, which ended more than eighty three years ago, the whole Islamic world fell under the Crusader banner -- under the British, French and Italian governments. They divided the whole world" (p. xii). Added to what was considered the dominance of Christian countries, the secularity of Turkey and Iran rankled all the more.

The extremist proponents of Islam feel that apart from political rule, people themselves and Islamic leadership in particular, has moved away from following the 'true' Islam as it was followed during the early inception of the religion. In order to move back to an approximation of that time, they advocate forming Islamic states, Islamic caliphates and the use of a strict form of *sharia*. As mentioned above, the ideology that has been prevalent among these factions is of the Hanbali sect of Sunni Islam, which derives a very strict form of interpretation of *sharia*. Political Islamist movements like Wahhabism and Salafist movements follow this strict interpretation of *sharia* and hope to propagate this ideology throughout the world through various means, including terrorism.

The Saud family in Arabia came to be allied with Wahhabism and it was propagated throughout the world by the basis of power and monetary control that the Saudi rulers exerted on smaller factions throughout the world (Delong-Bas, 2007). Osama bin Laden's ties to the Wahhabi leaders in Saudi Arabia and the Muslim Brotherhood movement (that flourished in Egypt but was later relocated and combined with the Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia) are well-established (Marshall, 2005). Commins (2009) states that the "apex of cooperation"

between Saudi Wahhabis and Islamist terrorist groups was the Afghan *jihad* (religious war). After the invasion of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in 1979 (covered in the next section more fully), a *fatwa* (edict / decree) was issued by a Muslim Brotherhood cleric with ties to Saudi religious institutions, that decreed a religious war against the Soviet occupying forces calling for the defense of Muslim lands. This *fatwa* was later also upheld by Saudi Arabia's Grand Mufti (Kepel, 2003).

Responding to the *fatwa*, tens of thousands of Muslim volunteers went to Afghanistan to fight the Soviet occupation forces. Commins (2009) places the number of volunteers at an estimated 35,000, with 12,000-25,000 of those coming from Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries also provided financial support for the *jihad* (Kepel, 2003; Delong-Bas, 2007). One of the volunteers who went from Saudi Arabia to Afghanistan to fight the holy war was Osama bin Laden.

The particular strains of Islamic extremism are important in understanding the ideology of the Taliban and their imposition of a strict form of what they consider 'purified' Islam in Afghanistan. Through this section, I attempted to provide a very brief overview of the history of Islam, its various sects, and how these multiplicities led to the circumstances that in turn produced the enforcing of a version of the *sharia* in Afghan society that was removed socially, politically and religiously from other versions, and some argue, from the original revelation in the Quran (Munir, 2011). The next section looks at the socio-political history of Afghanistan in order to understand other influences that might help communicative actors contextualize the lived experience of individuals in the country.

A Historical Overview of the Socio-Political Conflict in Afghanistan

The current public sphere in Afghanistan consists of the predominantly Muslim population of the country (Moghadam, 2003; Afghanistan, 2015). The ethnic make-up of the population is diverse, with many tribal groups predominant in particular regions. The largest ethnicity within Afghanistan is made up of the Pashtuns who live in the eastern and central southern regions (Afghanistan, 2015). The society is very tribal and familial, and the Pashtun people live by an ethos called Pashtunwali that is informed by feudal and masculinist ideals coalesced into a code of conduct. The society is also very patriarchal, with males having more power and agency within society (Moghadam, 1999). Amidst the differences in ethnicities and language between - Dari, Pashto and various Turkic tongues, the unifying factor is religion. Almost all citizens are Muslim, with 80% belonging to the Sunni sect and the minority being Shiite (Afghanistan, 2015; Moghadam, 2002).

According to Moghadam (2003), Afghan society is rural and pastoral for the most part, with only a few urban centers. UN statistics (2016) show that 26.3% of the population lived in urban areas while 73.7% was made up of rural residents in 2014. Along with this, a large amount of the population is made up of nomads who move between the plains and uplands with their herds. The current society has a very limited experience of the modern world, which is restricted mainly to the urban middle and upper classes. Agriculture is the main occupation, with oilfields and small-scale manufacturing providing other major livelihoods to the inhabitants. There are, however, extremely high levels of unemployment due to the political turmoil the country has been through - about 40% of people were unemployed in 2005 (Afghanistan, 2015). These social, ethnic, religious and economic determinants have shaped the Afghan public sphere, along with the political developments of the past century. In this section, we will conduct a brief

overview of the varied and wide-ranging historical and political influences that led to the shaping of the current social order in Afghanistan, concentrating on the role of women in society.

This societal structure has been shaped by the recent political and cultural history of the region. A detailed history of the power struggles that shaped Afghan society is beyond the scope of this project, however, a very 'broad strokes' version will throw light on the pertinent aspects of Afghan sociopolitical history and culture in order to understand the communicative ground in which the NGOs are operating. During the 19th century, Afghanistan was influenced significantly by the expanding British and Russian empires. The first Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842) was instrumental in overthrowing the British stronghold over the region but the second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1880) resulted in some British control over the foreign affairs of the country (Omrani, 2007; Afghanistan, 2015). The influence of Western thought was significant during the 19th century, which had an effect on the political rule of King Amanullah.

In the 1920s, King Amanullah's efforts to reform the country that contributed to issues like the position of women were faced with severe criticism from the populace (Moghadam, 2003). King Amanullah instituted widespread reforms like compulsory elementary education of women, abolition of the traditional veil for women, and establishment of co-educational schools (Moghadam, 1999; Afghanistan, 2015). Due to opposition from tribal and religious leaders, Amanullah was overthrown in 1929 and power was seized by various leaders, prominent among them Mohammed Zahir Shah (1933-1973), who had a much more gradual approach to modernization. During an attempt at democratization in the 1970s, Afghanistan was deeply influenced by and built a close relationship with the Soviet Union (Moghadam, 1999; Afghanistan, 2015).

In 1978, a Marxist coup and Soviet occupation resulted in long-term upheaval and disorder within the country. The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) seized power in 1978 and instituted changes that affected the societal structure and place of women in society. They replaced Islamic and religious laws with secular Marxist-Leninist ones. Men could no longer have beards and women could not wear the traditional *chador* - a traditional garment consisting of a large piece of cloth covering the head and upper body. Mosques were no longer places where people could congregate and pray (Saikal, 2006; Moghadam, 1999) however, the position of women in the public sphere was much more participatory, with women working outside the home in various occupations and the basic education of girls being given importance (Mogadham, 2003).

Afghanistan was occupied by the Soviet Union in the 1979-1989 decade, which resulted in political and social upheaval, accounting for about 1 million to 1,500,000 deaths and about 3-6 million refugees to Iran, Pakistan, India, the United States and the European Union (Khalidi, 1991; Rubin, 2002; Afghanistan, 2015). The United States' involvement in supporting and arming the Mujahideen as well as international pressure toward the departure of the Soviet Union caused the Soviets to withdraw in 1989. The Afghanistan War (1979-1989) devastated the country and the guerilla forces of the Mujahideen gained ground after the Soviet withdrawal (Afghanistan, 2015).

In early 1992, Kabul was captured and a new government was set up by the Mujahideen; it was led by Burhanuddin Rabbani as the interim president of Afghanistan. In late 1994, a militia of Islamic fundamentalist students of Pashtun origin, the Taliban, emerged as a strong political force. In September of 1996, the Taliban finally overthrew the government and gained control of Kabul. From early 1998 to late 2000, US-led military forces and UN economic

sanctions ravaged the country and took their toll on human life as well as the economic state of affairs of the region (Afghanistan, 2015; Goodson, 2001).

During this political and social turmoil in the last quarter of the twentieth century, Afghan citizens sought refuge in neighboring Pakistan and Iran (Gregorian, 1969; Dupree, 1973; Rubin, 2002) for the most part, and in smaller numbers fled toward Western European countries and the United States. The Islamic guerilla movement that took over the country during 1992 to 1996 favored an extremely conservative approach towards the position of women. The Taliban continued this religious fundamentalist approach, destroying two ancient Buddha statues in Bamian in early 2001, citing the figures to be idolatrous and un-Islamic (Afghanistan, 2015; Rathje, 2001).

The present war in Afghanistan began on October 7, 2001, when the armed forces of the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia and the Afghan United Front launched Operation Enduring Freedom (Rubin, 2002; Afghanistan, 2015). Fifteen years into the war, the United States is still faced with Taliban insurgency in the country and the newly elected democratic government has still to see a significant participation of women in the public sphere (Joya, 2011; Moghadam, 2002).

The Role of Women in Afghan Society

While the history and sociopolitical conditions of the last century have had a significant impact on the position of women in Afghanistan as traced in the section above, the largest effect on the role of women in the current public spaces in Afghanistan can perhaps be said to be the Taliban regime. Earlier on in the chapter, I explained how the ideology of the Taliban was influenced by particularly strict Islamic jurisprudence and interpretation of Islamic law by the Hanbali School of Islamic law, and then the Muslim Brotherhood and Wahhabi movements in

the Middle East. Keeping that context in mind, I will now look at the lived experience of women that was affected by the enforced radical fundamentalism of the Taliban regime.

The effect of the Taliban on Afghan society during 1996 and 2001 reconfigured the public sphere in the country in tune with an "Islamic countermodernity" (Cole, 2003, p. 773). Taliban's almost complete power over Afghanistan during the earlier part of the current century was the result of the use of modern techniques like the state, mass spectacle, radio, and demonstrations of armed power. Towards the turn of the last century, radical Islamism imposed by the Taliban coded women as essentially subjective and private, which excluded them from the public sphere. Elements like coeducation, mixing of the genders in work settings, entry of women into traditionally male professions and consumerism were actively opposed by the Taliban (Cole, 2003).

Cole (2003) suggests that the Taliban's form of rule can be termed a political modernity as a modern recreation of power using medieval motifs of a totalitarian regime and a somewhat arbitrary and idiosyncratic, personalized implementation of laws. While the Taliban presented themselves as implementing a strict interpretation of *sharia* or Islamic law, the result was an uneven application of its principles in random cases (Munir, 2011). In addition, the Taliban allowed no elections or public deliberations. The use of radio allowed the mass distribution of the Taliban's message to the public, who merely received one-sided messages from the rulers rather than participating in a public sphere. In addition to spreading their message by the use of radio, Taliban appointed Muslim clerics or *imams* as mouthpieces of their messages within communities. As representatives of the Taliban, the *imams* therefore enjoyed the same power over the people as the armed enforcers of the regime themselves (Cole, 2003).

The head of the Taliban, Mullah Mohammad Omar, who emerged as a leader in the 1990s, claimed an Islamic caliphate and proclaimed that the country was the Emirate of Afghanistan under the Taliban regime (Afghanistan, 2015). The Taliban, under his leadership, employed public spectacle to rule over the people. They revived punishment and executions of criminals as demonstrations of their power (Crews & Tarzi, 2009; Maley, 1998) in a public performance that essentially inscribed the power of the state on the body of the offender (Sulima & Hala, 2002; Zoya, 2002).

In addition to the public display of power by the regime on lawbreakers, the Taliban also de-privatized religion in the life of the general public and brought it from the private sphere to the public sphere (Cole, 2003). Activities such as dancing, music, kite flying, pigeon flying, the representation of the human form like photographs or art were forbidden by a decree issued by Mullah Mohammad Omar in 1996 on the basis of them being considered frivolous or disrespectful, which is viewed by extreme disapproval by the Wahhabi tradition in Islam. Men were required to worship in public. They were also required to grow their beards and trim their moustaches according to a literal read of sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. Women could not appear in public unaccompanied by a close male relative or with any part of their body uncovered (Crews & Tarzi, 2009; Maley, 1998; RAWA Restrictions, n.d.).

The coercion into worship by the Taliban and the performance of public religiosity had the effect of making religion a matter of public knowledge and concern of not only the authoritarian regime, but also the people in society. Thus, Afghanistan was turned into a perfect example of a fundamentalist religious public sphere where each member of a social community observed one another and authoritarian leaders enforced dogmatic orthodoxy through the public wielding of power. What was public had to conform to the understanding of *sharia* as interpreted

by medieval jurists (Cole, 2003). Men and women's bodies as well as their religious life had become an area where the power of the regime could be demonstrated (Davids, 2013).

The female body in Afghanistan was coded as private by the Taliban regime. Hence, strict gender segregation, full body public veiling, and accompanied access to public places by a close male relative at all times were amongst the severe sanctions imposed on the women in Afghanistan in the 1990s (Benard, 2002; Emadi, 2002; Skaine, 2002). This imposition reversed what little improvements the Soviet regime had made during the 1980s, which had included women serving in the military and in the government, working in professional capacities in factories, commercial industries as well as acting as unveiled newscasters, and in non-governmental or non-profit organizations. The communist government had campaigned to enroll girls in schools for basic education and under their rule; there was some improvement in the rates of enrollment (Moghadam, 2003). With the transfer of power to Burhanuddin Rabbani's Islamist government in 1992, the issue of women's rights began to change for the worse, undoing the strides made by the previous administration.

The Taliban regime forbade women to drive, closed girls' schools and essentially imprisoned women within the home by citing inaccurate (it has been argued that the interpretation of these Islamic texts was either incomplete or wholly erroneous (Munir, 2011)) interpretations of Quranic verses, sayings of the prophet and *sharia*. The confinement of women to a small interior space and the end of education for girls socially deprived women in Afghanistan of the basic freedoms afforded to individuals in almost any other place around the world (Mogadham, 2002; RAWA Restrictions, n.d.). The brand of Islamic jurisprudence employed by the Taliban regime and implementation of strict laws over the Afghan culture in the late 1990s and early 2000s created a society where men or women did not enjoy any agency and

were denied a voice in the public sphere (Cole, 2003; Mogadham, 2002). The position of women especially, was no better than an inanimate object. While the medieval and erroneous imposition of radical Islamist policies was only for a short period of time over the turn of the century, the effect has been severe and long-lasting on a nation that has been dealing with totalitarian regimes, war, turmoil and displacement over the last quarter of the twentieth century and since.

In present day Afghanistan, even after a decade and a half of the war that was started to eliminate the scourge of the Taliban regime and its ideology from the nation, the situation of women in the country is grave. A study conducted by Former Deputy Health Minister Faizullah Kair indicates that an estimated 2300 women or girls were attempting suicide annually due to mental illness, domestic violence or socio-economic hardship (IRIN, 2012). Violence against women and their denial of basic human rights still is widespread in Afghanistan. Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), the humanitarian news and analyses service formerly affiliated with the United Nations' Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, offers grim statistics on women's lives in Afghanistan: Every thirty minutes, an Afghan woman dies during childbirth. Eighty-seven percent of Afghan women are illiterate, while only 30 percent of girls have access to education in Afghanistan. One in every three Afghan women experience physical, psychological, or sexual violence. The average life expectancy rate for women is 44 years, and between 70 to 80 percent of women face forced marriages (IRIN, 2007). The basic health and condition of women in Afghanistan is bleak by every measure.

While the days of the stronghold of the fundamental radicalism of the Taliban are past and the new democratically elected government has enacted progressive laws like the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) (Afghanistan, 2015), studies show that *sharia* or traditional methods of resolving disputes is still prevalent among the general population

(Stabile & Kumar, 2005). Moreover, in the majority of rural areas, the Taliban still remains in control (IRIN, 2011). A UN Women report states that "all major social indicators … show a consistent pattern of women's disempowerment in nearly all dimensions of their lives" (para. 1, n.d.). Pointing to a low mortality rate and life expectancy, illiteracy, restrictions on mobility, widespread cases of violence against women, nonparticipation of women in the labor market, and under-representation in all sectors of society, the report declares that "Afghanistan remains one of the worst countries in the world to be born female" (para. 1, n.d.).

The authoritarian religious mentality imposed by the Taliban still bears weight on the Afghan psyche and to reform the society and the conception of women within that society is a delicate and uncertain business, especially in a culture that still advocates a "neopatriarchal countermodernity" (Cole, 2003, p. 775) that combats those elements of modernity that uphold the entry of women into the public sphere. Within this sociopolitical and religious culture, various nongovernmental organizations try to achieve change for women's rights in Afghanistan and continue to battle the hegemonic discourses of power and control perpetrated by the Taliban regime. The next section looks at one of these organizations and its public relations activities.

WISE and the *Imam* Training Program on Women's Rights

The Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality (WISE) is a global women-led social movement sponsored by the American Society for Muslim Advancement (ASMA), a New York-based nongovernmental organization operating predominantly in the United States (About WISE, 2016). WISE was launched in New York City in November 2006 by 150 leading Muslim women scholars, activists, artists and religious and society leaders, representing more than 25 countries. Since their launch, WISE has worked in a number of places around the world

and collaborated with a variety of organizations in order to work toward improving the position of Muslim women around the globe.

WISE is "an initiative with both [a] global scale and deep roots in Muslim communities throughout the world" (About WISE, 2016). Understanding that the problems faced by Muslim women are diverse and multi-faceted, WISE aims to work through a collaborative strategy, complimenting other organizations who share the organizations' vision and who are already working on the ground in various nations to transform the position of Muslim women in society. Through collaboration and supporting the work of Muslim women leaders worldwide, WISE aims to build the capacity for collective action.

Their collaborative projects work toward the aim of "effectively combat[ing] gender-based discriminatory practices and de-legitimiz[ing] destructive interpretations of Islam against women" (WISE Muslim Women, 2016) and use "an approach that is multi-pronged and sensitive to particular contexts" (WISE Muslim Women, 2016). Some of the examples of the work carried out by the organization are: an *imam*-training program on women's rights carried out in Kabul and Jalalabad in Afghanistan; eradicating female genital cutting in Giza, Egypt; and a domestic violence awareness campaign in Jhelum, Pakistan (WISE Muslim Women, 2016). In all of these programs, WISE collaborates with in-country organizations and leaders in order to implement the projects at a local, grassroots level.

WISE understands gender equality as an intrinsic part of the Islamic faith. The group's vision is: "To generate a space in which Muslim women actively dialogue, debate, and collaborate on pressing issues of social justice, in order to articulate an ethical and egalitarian Islam" (The Global Muslim Women's Shura Council, 2016). The members of the organization believe that "the Muslim woman is worthy of respect and dignity, that as a legal individual,

spiritual being, social person, responsible agent, free citizen, and servant of God, she holds fundamentally equal rights to exercise her abilities and talents in all areas of human activity" (WISE Compact, 2016). Citing the Quran, WISE states that women's rights are rooted in the Islamic religion and the six objectives of *sharia* - " the protection and promotion of religion (*al-din*), life (*al-nafs*), mind (*al-'aql*), family (*al-nasl*), wealth (*al-mal*), and dignity (*al-'ird*)" (WISE Compact, 2016).

Seeing the need for women's participation in the prevalent discourses in Islamic jurisprudence, the organization formed an all-women *Shura* Council (consultative council) "to generate a space in which Muslim women actively dialogue, debate, and collaborate on pressing issues of social justice, in order to articulate an ethical and egalitarian Islam" (The Global Muslim Women's *Shura* Council, 2016, "Vision"). It describes its mission in the following way:

> To serve as a global and inclusive council of Muslim women scholars, activists, and specialists that will:
>
> 1. engage with issues of social injustice against Muslim women through critical review and interpretations of legal and religious texts and practices;
> 2. disseminate these interpretations around the world and, in doing so, re-establish women's authority in religious discourse;
> 3. as supported by the pluralism inherent in Islam, to enable women to make dignified and autonomous choices;
> 4. develop a variety of training programs, both short-term intensive and long-term, in order to equip women with expertise in the Islamic legal and ethical traditions. (The Global Muslim Women's *Shura* Council, 2016, "Mission")

The necessity of *Shura* Council's reinterpretation of Islamic texts and *sharia* is apparent as shown by the erroneous application of the law in Afghan society by the Taliban regime due to patriarchal and societal influences as well as an interpretation of *sharia* imposed by the strictest faction of Islam, the Hanbali sect, influenced by Wahhabi doctrine.

In order to disseminate their message, the organization works through a framework for change that is built on the principles of communication, collaboration, interpretation and action (WISE Conceptual Framework for Change, 2010). WISE is committed to communication "both among Muslim women and their allies and to media and the larger public" (p. 4). For WISE, communication of their principles and efforts is necessary for their success. They believe that communication should be "egalitarian and participatory and focus on empowerment rather than feelings of isolation and helplessness" (p. 4) in order to be effective for social change. Dialogue and knowledge-sharing are important elements of communicating for social change, according to WISE's framework, and their global conventions offer an opportunity to share knowledge of best practices with interested parties and partners. The creation of a web portal also furthers their principle of communication and information sharing.

The second principle WISE's framework employs is collaboration. WISE accomplish this by forming "strategic partnerships, including with other global and local Muslim women's organizations, men, and non-Muslims dedicated to gender equality and social justice" (WISE Conceptual Framework for Change, 2010, p. 5). In collaborating with international organization, WISE aims to achieve legitimacy of its mission and work, while collaboration with local organizations affords it a clearer understanding of the use of local strategies for conducting its work. Following the 2009 WISE global conference, the organization collaborated with various

in-country local organizations in Afghanistan, Egypt and Pakistan to work on projects involving trainings, capacity-building and consultative activities by the local organizations.

The third principle used by WISE, interpretation, refers to religious interpretation and reinterpretation of Islamic texts that support gender equality of women. Recognizing that harmful religious interpretations form the basis of the violation of women's rights, WISE activists have created a Muslim women's *Shura* Council (The Global Muslim Women's *Shura* Council, 2016), a body consisting of Muslim female scholars and activists that promotes women's rights through the interpretation of Islamic texts like the Quran, the prophetic texts and *sharia*. Using their own interpretations and reinterpretations of these religious texts, the organization then uses it to educate and advocate for women's rights and their empowerment. The organization also promotes a *Muftiyyah* Training Program that aims to train and mentor *muftiyyahs*, Muslim women jurists, in Islamic law in order to interpret Islamic legal traditions (WISE Conceptual Framework for Change, 2010).

The fourth principle of the framework for change adopted by WISE is action, which refers to proactive action stemming from personal responsibility to affect social change. The framework references a verse in the Quran, quoting: "Verily, never will God change the condition of a people until they change that which is in themselves (The Quran, 13:11)" as the basis for action for social change. WISE projects seek to apply "goal-oriented, context-based adaptability and action" (WISE Conceptual Framework for Change, 2010, p. 7) in the light of Islamic principles that can affect social change within the communities that the organization works in. Through its actions, the organization seeks to "empower women through education, communication, and capacity-building in order to support them as actors within their communities and global civil society" (p. 7). In Afghanistan, WISE's collaboration with a local

partner utilizes an interpretation- and communication-based approach to education and dissemination of information on women's rights.

WISE declares that it is unique as it "is transforming the position of Muslim women in innumerable contexts from within the Islamic faith and traditions" (About WISE, 2016). By coming from a place from within religion and its interpretation, WISE activists are positioned to attend to the place of religion in the daily lives of their publics. The organization "offers a Muslim voice" (About WISE, 2016) to address Muslim women's position in society and challenge harmful religious practices through religious legitimacy and authenticity. Through a holistic approach that recognizes issues of economic status, religion, educational level, healthcare and sociopolitical backgrounds, WISE is able to utilize context-specific knowledge of each of its various publics to affect change in the lived experiences of women in the societies in which it works. Therefore, WISE understands the various interrelated factors that contribute to gender inequality and works toward eradicating it with a unique framework for each place and publics that it addresses. In this dissertation, the organization's *imam*-training program in Afghanistan will be studied as an example of their work and as a communicative praxis model of activist transnational public relations in the real world.

In 2009, WISE collaborated with the Noor Educational and Capacity Development Organization (NECDO), an Afghani non-governmental development organization dedicated to helping women and children in need (WISE Muslim Women, 2016) in order to start a grassroots public relations campaign for women's rights in Afghanistan. Jamila Afghani, NECDO's director, fashioned a project to train *imams* on women's rights in order to provide a place for them in the Afghan public sphere.

The *imam* training program was implemented in two phases: the first, a six-month pilot project that focused on training and mobilizing *imams* from twenty mosques in Kabul. The *imams* learned about issues of education, marriage, inheritance, ownership and property, and political and social participation of women and how these were influenced by a patriarchal societal structure in Afghanistan. They were educated on accurate related Quranic and *hadith* interpretations, Afghan national laws, various instruments on women's rights, international human rights material focused on gender, and strategies for change (WISE Muslim Women, 2016). The twenty participating *imams* delivered more than 300 sermons to approximately 117,600 congregants during the six month period. About 14,400 of the congregants who heard the sermons were women. WISE's report says that media coverage helped with spreading the message to an estimated 9.5 million people in the country (WISE Muslim Women, 2016). The project also developed, printed and distributed 10,000 booklets based on the 'Women's Rights in Islam' sermons. These booklets were printed in the local language, Dari, to aid understanding by the local community members (2009-2010 WISE Activities Report, 2010).

Phase two of the project took place in June 2010, extending the project for a year in the twenty participating mosques in Kabul and ten new mosques in another major city, Jalalabad. University students monitored the *imams'* Friday sermons to determine that the project's objectives were met. According to the university student project monitors, the overwhelming majority (97%) out of a random sample of 240 people interviewed after the sermons agreed with the core message of the project, i.e., that Islamic rights for men and women were equal (WISE Muslim Women, 2016).

Phase two of the project also worked toward general skill-building of the participating *imams* in the areas of communication, conflict resolution, media engagement, and networking.

Through these trainings, WISE determined that the *imams* could become even better advocates of women's rights in Afghanistan (2009-2010 WISE Activities Report, 2010).

In phase two, an additional 15,000 copies of booklets on women's rights were printed in the local language, Dari, and distributed as well. WISE reports that the booklets allowed women to refer to written evidence of the sermons they heard and empowered them to raise their voice in affecting change for their own rights in education, marriage, inheritance, ownership and property, and political and social participation (WISE Muslim Women, 2016).

The work of WISE in general, its adoption of the fours principles of communication, interpretation, collaboration and action, as well as its specific work with the Imam-Training Program engages public relations theories and strategies that have been discussed in the previous chapters. The next section will elaborate on how WISE and its partner NECDO have applied the principles that were found to be important in the practice of transnational public relations in their overall organizational conceptualization as well as their grassroots campaign for women's rights in Afghanistan.

Applied Transnational Public Relations

In the previous chapter, the theory and practice of transnational public relations was shown to have a reliance on various interdisciplinary theories and practices from public relations practiced in postcolonial nations in particular. The rhetorical model of public relations (Heath, 2009), postcolonial theory, (Spivak, 1994), the culture-centered approach (Dutta, 2001) an intersubjective approach (Habermas, 1984; 1987; Ricoeur, 1975) and relationship-building by focusing on the networks of society (Bernays, 1928) and the personal influence model of public relations (Grunig, et. al., 1995) were deemed as starting points to start building a theory of transnational public relations as practiced in postcolonial nations.

WISE's conceptualization of its mission and work through its framework of change encapsulate the strategies of transnational public relations. In this section, we will look at specific theories that inform transnational public relations as well as the strategies that can be employed in public relations work in postcolonial nations, and see how they have been applied by WISE's work and programs.

WISE states that its work is inherently communicative and rhetorical in nature (WISE Conceptual Framework for Change, 2010). Considering the current situation in Afghanistan a rhetorical problem that demanded a response from rhetorical actors (Heath, 2009), WISE's activists responded to the issue of the disempowerment and marginalization of women in Afghan society by their *imam* training program and other public relations activities. The disruption of the dominant discourse of "neopatriarchal countermodernity" (Cole, 2003) in Afghanistan is a rhetorical act. By providing a rhetorical interruption to the ongoing discourse, the organization is demonstrating the use of *parrhesia*, defined by Foucault (2001) as the courageous act of disrupting dominant discourses in society, thereby opening a new space for another truth to emerge. Postcolonial theorists advocate the use of *parrhesia* or fearless speech when they invoke the marginalized to speak of their truths to the powerful discourses that seek to silence them. The dominant discourse within the Afghan society was informed by a particular reading of religion, and patriarchal and tribal influences that marginalized women. WISE attempted to find a voice for these women within this discourse by their *imam* training program and various public relations initiatives that aimed to first educate the religious leadership, which would then disseminate their message to the larger public through the Friday sermons. WISE used the pragmatic structures available to them to create dialogue for change from the ground up rather

than a top down approach that began with prejudgments about the civil society that existed and operated from imperialistic idealizations of culture.

Heath (2009) states that "through dialogue, individuals and groups co-create and negotiate identity, interest and socially relevant meaning" (p. 22). The dialogic approach to communicating with the *imams* and educating them about interpretations of Islamic texts speaks of an effort to create "shared meaning, which in turn centers on definitions of meaning" (Heath, 2009, p. 39). Since violence against women and their subordinate role in society was deeply woven into Afghan society, the organization faced an uphill task in educating the *imams*. WISE's partner NECDO's activists states that they "faced significant challenges throughout the project, including criticism from some Imams who thought the program too "Western"" (WISE Muslim Women, 2016, para. 6). Through working in smaller workgroups composed of more moderate and conservative *imams*, the organization's activists created dialogic and shared meaning between the various communicative actors, leading to a deeper understanding of the organizational message and issues regarding Afghan society. Wider dissemination of women's rights messages through sermons by *imams* achieved the same goal within the wider local and national community in Afghanistan.

The rhetorical model of public relations advocated by Heath (2009) hinges upon the three strategies of co-created meaning, collaborative decision-making and identification. By using Afghanistan's constitution and key Islamic texts as the basis of engagement with *imams* in Afghanistan, WISE sought to challenge unjust interpretations of Islamic law and practices while creating shared meaning through identification of a common thread present in dominant as well as emerging discourses. As mentioned above, in the *imam* training sessions, WISE activists conducted sessions in small workgroups with a balance of moderate and conservative *imams* to

foster extensive discussions that helped in the co-creation of meaning toward more accurate interpretations of Islamic teachings.

WISE's strategy of partnering with local organizations demonstrates the use of a collaborative strategy. Partnership with NECDO in the imam training program shows that WISE is attuned to the need for understanding the local sociocultural narratives of the women in Afghanistan as well as understanding social structures and the use of influentials to disseminate their message in the right way. Working through collaboration is a hallmark of all WISE's projects, as seen in their philosophy above (WISE Conceptual Framework for Change, 2010). The second strategy of the rhetorical model of public relations, collaboration, is thus also shown to be used by WISE in their application of activist transnational public relations.

The third strategy proposed by Heath (2009) for the rhetorical model of public relations is identification. Identification of the activists and their publics with a common religion served to satisfy "spiritual or meaning needs, which foster feelings of connectedness, gratefulness and integration" (WISE Conceptual Framework for Change, 2010, p. 11) between the speaker and he audience in a rhetorical situation. WISE believes that the centrality of a moral vision of Islam within their message would help to create lasting social change by reaching the hearts and minds of their publics through identification. Through dialogic interaction with religious leaders in Afghanistan that was based on key religious scriptures and texts, WISE based their activist disruption of dominant discourses through identifying around the commonplaces of religious rhetoric and influenced their publics' about the place of women in Afghan society.

WISE's objective of a personal responsibility toward affecting social change and their use of rhetoric to accomplish this is evocative of Isocrates' directive to use rhetoric "in the service to society" (Heath, 2009, p. 30), for Isocrates believed that rhetoric should be employed for the

collective interest of all rather than promoting the narrow self-interest of a few. In this way, the rhetorical model of public relations and WISE's use of it is inherently Other-centered, attentive to listening to the voices of the subaltern (Spivak, 1994) and marginalized within Afghan society, and providing them the means to speak for themselves (Dutta, 2011). WISE's activist transnational public relations practices thus show an engagement with postcolonial theory and a culture-centered approach (Dutta, 2011). WISE's strategy of the empowerment of women through educational sermons and booklets makes them communicative actors in their own right, recognizing them as individuals who can represent themselves. By encouraging women to act as their own agents, WISE activists are asking them to exercise power and control over their narratives and speak of their notions of identity and belonging (Ricoeur, 1975). Even though WISE and NECDO have started the conversation regarding the place of women in society in Afghanistan, ultimately the women of Afghanistan must author their own narratives.

Spivak (1994) warns against conducting epistemic violence on the subaltern. The hegemonic representation of the subaltern without understanding their sociopolitical, cultural and religious situatedness amounts to not only a misunderstanding but the "complete overhaul of the episteme" (p. 76) of the subaltern. WISE activists should be careful in applying a normative, imperialist narrative on the emerging discourses of the subaltern, and the organizational members do this exceedingly well by instituting collaborations with local nongovernmental organizations like NECDO, who are more familiar with local and historical narratives of Afghan women as well as the structural nuances of society and wielders of power in the societal structure of Afghanistan.

In postcolonial theory, it is important to understand and interpret the ways of thinking and being of the subaltern without any "oriental imaginaries" (Hirji, 2005, p.1; Said, 1978) of

'saving' the subaltern coming in the way of this understanding. In partnering with NECDO, a regional organization based in Afghanistan, WISE ensured that it works *with* the women of Afghanistan and not *for* them (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Hirji, 2005). This is important if WISE seeks to encourage the voice of women and understand the struggles of the dispossessed and marginalized people (Dutta-Bergman, 2005) from the region without imposing their own agency or a voice from outside of the society (Stabile & Kumar, 2005) within which it is working. In its 'Framework for Change,' WISE echoes this point by stating that activist and social movements need to "speak the language of local communities and reach consciences" (2010, p. 10), asserting that the organization's collaboration with NECDO reaches this goal.

WISE see their work with the *Shura* Council as defining and redefining the meaning of religious interpretations and Islamic texts. A constructive hermeneutic approach to textual interpretation demands a dialogue with the text, the interpreter as well as the historical moment (Arnett & Holba, 2012). By interpreting the texts with respect to the written word as well as the application of the meaning to the lived experience of women in Afghanistan, the *Shura* Council members first seek to listen to the text based on its own merits rather than letting patriarchal or cultural ideologies hinder them, and secondly, are attentive to the historical moment by understanding the cultural and social situations that gave rise to various interpretations. Thus, the activists successfully "recontextualize" (WISE Conceptual Framework for Change, 2010, p. 10) the dominant discourses within the society by reinterpreting *sharia* and disseminating their message in the Afghan society.

Finally, in understanding the relationship between power and culture (Foucault, 1980) in Afghan society, WISE activists seek to understand social interconnectivity and engage the 'leaders of influence' (Bernays, 2004) in dialogue through the *imam* training program.

Furthermore, through the program, they aim to develop relationships with the *imams*, thus implementing the personal influence model of public relations (Grunig, et. al., 1995) where the goal is to create long-lasting relationships with influential leaders of society and encouraging them to disseminate information to the larger publics the public relations practitioner is seeking to influence. The *imam* training program is a perfect exemplar of both the use of the interconnecting networks of society as well as the personal influence model, as the *imams*, once trained, disseminate information of women's rights to various publics through their Friday sermons.

The objective of studying WISE and their work in Afghanistan is twofold. One, I seek to show that activist transnational public relations theory built in the previous chapter is applicable on the ground in one context and situation as shown by the practices of WISE in Afghanistan. Second, while this case study is one manifestation and enactment of the transnational public relations model, the theory potentially could be applied across different religious, social and cultural situations around the world.

In this chapter, it has been shown that transnational public relations (as it is practiced in Afghanistan by WISE) is attentive to particularity and recognizes the historical, social, cultural and religious issues prevalent in that society in order to work with them. In every application of transnational public relations, it becomes necessary to attend to the local and the particular, rather than apply a global way of understanding in working in Other societies. Both interconnectivity as well as particularity remain essential in transnational public relations. The theory and practice of transnational public relations proposed and demonstrated in this project has been shown to work in this particular instance, however, there might be other theories that can inform and other strategies that can be used in transnational public relations in other

countries and other situations that will be attentive to the particularity in those nations and cultures.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to demonstrate that the theoretical foundations and strategies of transnational public relations covered in the last chapter can be applied through rhetorical engagement with local discourses, attention to a postcolonial ethos and the cultural background of institutional actors and publics, a focus on Other-centered communication, and the employment of relationship-building activities in order to connect with the influentials in a society. The case of *imam* training in WISE, in partnership with the Afghanistan-based organization NECDO, exemplified an applied or praxis model of activist transnational public relations in a postcolonial nation.

A brief sociopolitical history of Afghanistan was reviewed in order to situate the theories and practices of activist transnational public relations within the cultural and social conditions that exist in a Muslim, postcolonial society. The dominant discourse within Afghan society was informed by the Taliban's imposition of neopatriarchal countermodernism (Cole, 2003). By disrupting this discourse, nongovernmental organizations attempt to build a space for Muslim women within the public sphere in order to share their voices and be heard (WISE Conceptual Framework for Change, 2010). In redefining the place of women in society according to Islamic texts and doctrines, the *Shura* Council recontextualized the patriarchal discourses within society. Using the strategies of co-creation, collaboration and identification (Heath, 2009), activists from WISE and NECDO enacted rhetorical and transnational strategies of public relations. By privileging an Other-centered focus in their discourse and partnerships with local activist organizations, WISE demonstrated an understanding of a culture-centered approach (Dutta,

2011) in a postcolonial nation. And finally, through their activities in the *imam* training program, WISE displayed an application of relationship-building through understanding the power and influence of elites within the social networks of Afghan society and leveraging them to disseminate information to the larger publics by way of utilizing the personal influence model (Grunig, et. al., 1995) of public relations.

By approaching the practice of public relations from a rhetorical perspective and situating it within the public sphere, this project aims to provide a notion of transnational public relations praxis that is attentive to difference and Other-centered discourse in postcolonial nations. Within this project, the focus is on activism, and how transnational public relations can engage marginalized voices of women and provide them with the agency to speak about their own narratives and ways of knowledge production; legitimizing their ontological and epistemological presence. Through the work of WISE and NECDO, the project looks at the application of strategic rhetoric to enable the participation of women in the Afghan public sphere.

We increasingly live in a world that is moving closer together in the way individuals interact with each other (McLuhan, 1962), and in such a world, it becomes necessary to engage in activist public relations (Smith & Ferguson, 2010) and a search for social justice not just in local or national contexts, but in a transnational context as well. This project identifies one such case of activist transnational public relations but the theories and practices covered here can be applied to other situations across national, cultural and religious boundaries across the world.

Chapter Seven - Conclusion

This dissertation focuses on the theory and practice of transnational public relations in postcolonial spaces. It looks at the relationship between culture and power in the Muslim public sphere in current day Afghanistan, and how rhetorical interruptions to the dominant discourses and hegemonic positions of power in the Afghan public sphere can be instrumental in making a space for marginalized voices to enter this postcolonial public space. By looking at public relations efforts of non-governmental organizations, I examined the demands and constraints of place, time, culture and audience that affect choices made by speakers to influence the moment. This organization's programs and public relations practices address the dominant discourses of influential leaders in society to affect social change and make space for women voices to be heard in the Afghanistan public sphere.

Chapter one introduced the overall project and establishes the main areas and subjects the dissertation covers. It presented the importance of such a project amidst a world where distances are shrinking due to advances in communication technology and travel (McLuhan, 1962). The methodology of the project is discussed and a brief outline of all the chapters gives a brief overview of the overall dissertation.

Chapter two examined the public sphere as the place where the practice of public relations activities takes place. Habermas' (1991) notion of the bourgeois public sphere is studied as a starting point to understand the idea of the public sphere in various societies. Habermas outlines a rational-critical and engaged public that does the work of legitimizing the state's political action. However, he states, the ideal public sphere he envisions is no longer a reality as it has now been coopted by the media and elite, who use it to further their own agendas rather than for rational and critical debate. Hauser's (1999) idea of the public sphere being made up of

vernacular publics is closer in line to the publics prevalent in postcolonial spaces. His idea of a postmodern public sphere with a multiplicity of publics showcases the ability of various interested individuals to come together to discuss pertinent topics and shape public opinion. The public sphere in Muslim societies was also studied as a way to understand the sociopolitical and cultural issues prevalent in such public spheres. It was found that Muslim public spheres are diverse in nature across historical periods and geographical locations. However, some of the common characteristics were the formulation of religious ideology by the *umma* and, in more recent societies, religious and political movements that enforced religiosity by fundamentalist or authoritarian regimes on the minds and bodies of publics. However, an emerging idea of the postmodern public sphere in Muslim societies is emerging that is evolving into a transnational meeting point for the *umma*.

Chapter three moved the conversation forward into studying the Orientalist viewpoint and postcolonial spaces. Through the work of Said (1978) and Spivak (1997; 1994), this chapter looked at the Eastern and postcolonial ethos and how Western actors should understand and engage with them. Said's (1978) work on Orientalism highlights the identity and culture of Muslim societies as well as the Western understanding of the Orient. Spivak (1994) states that the identity of the subaltern is not acknowledged when she is not given the opportunity to speak or be heard in the public sphere. Both these authors point to issues of identity and representation of the marginalized and advocate a turning toward the Other without any preconceived biases as a way to listen to and understand their situatedness. Postcolonial feminism (Mohanty, 1991) and Islamic feminism (Badran, 2009) were also examined as ways to texture the understanding of the predicament of women in Afghanistan and how communicative actors would best be able to make space for their voices in the Afghan public sphere.

In chapter four, the role of public relations in society was examined. Western scholarship about public relations and its role in society focuses on linking public relations practices to democracy and civil society. Heath, Waymer and Palenchar (2013) state that the dialogic nature of public relations can give rise to deliberative democracy in society. Taylor (2010) sees civil society as a basis for dialogic public relations. But critics of this position (Dutta, 2011) state that dialogic public relations can and should be the basis for seeking change in societies in postcolonial nations that might not be termed a civil society or a democratic political structure with equal access to every citizen. Therefore, in non-inclusive public spheres, activist public relations can be a way to make space for marginalized voices and invite them into the conversations taking place in public spaces.

Chapter five built a theoretical case for transnational public relations and provided some strategies to practice it within postcolonial and collectivistic nations. Theory-building in transnational public relations requires assessment of theories from related disciplines that can then be applied to the philosophy and practice of transnational public relations. The chapter covered the rhetorical model of public relations (Heath, 2009) as a starting point to situate a dialogic and rhetorical basis for transnational public relations. The strategies of co-creation of meaning, collaborative decision-making and identification between the organization and its publics are the cornerstones of the practice of the rhetorical model of public relations. Next, an intersubjective approach is examined as a source of theory-building, where the notions of intersubjectivity and understanding of the Other's lifeworld can prove valuable to communication across national, cultural, social and religious borders. Habermas' (1984; 1987) theory of communicative action contributes to dialogic communication where marginalized publics can be invited to speak and their voices can be heard (Dutta, 2011). Postcolonial theory is instrumental

in understanding the lifeworld of the subaltern in postcolonial nations as well. Finally, the strategies of using the existing networks of society (Bernays, 2004) to disseminate information, and relation-building through the use of the personal influence model (Grunig, et. al., 1995) of public relations will be helpful for the practice of activist transnational public relations.

Chapter six examined a case that illustrates the practice of activist transnational public relations. The Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality (WISE), in partnership with Noor Educational Capacity Development Organization (NECDO), organized an *imam* training program in Afghanistan that aimed to educate people about women's right and make space for them to transform their marginalized status in society. In this chapter, first the sociopolitical and cultural history of Afghanistan was examined, then the philosophy and work of WISE was evaluated, then I showed how the *imam* training program and the values and beliefs of WISE are in accordance with the principles and practices determined to be beneficial for activist transnational public relations.

Significance and Directions for Future Work

This project is significant as it shows the need to learn about the Other, especially individuals from the Muslim and Third World culture in times when the West is struggling to make meaning of the ideologies and situations in the Middle East and Far Eastern Muslim nations. In times when difference is seen and distanced as the Other (Ramji, 2003), there is a need to understand and listen to the voices of the marginalized and dispossessed to realize their plight. Using activist transnational public relations, this project aims to study the work in the area of social justice for making space for the voices of the subaltern to emerge and be heard in the Afghan public sphere.

Conclusion

The Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality (WISE), in partnership with Noor Educational and Capacity Development Organization (NECDO), epitomized the characteristics of activist transnational public relations reviewed within this project to make space for the marginalized voice of women within the Afghan public sphere. Their *imam* training program proved as a praxis model of activist transnational public relations that could engage publics through attentiveness toward difference. While this was the example chosen to depict the application of the theory and practice of transnational public relations on the ground, the principles and strategies identified in this project can be applied in various other situations and places around the world.

To build a theory of transnational public relations, Wakefield (1992) calls for a need to build a foundation out of theories from similar and related fields. Responding to Wakefield's call, this project was an attempt to provide a theoretical foundation for the practices of transnational communication, but this area is still a new field where much more work is required. While rhetorical theory, Orientalism and postcolonial theory, public relations theory and an intersubjective approach were the key cornerstones of this project, there are many more disciplines that can be the source of theory-building in the field of public relations. Intercultural communication, health communication, social work, anthropology, sociology, feminist studies, gender and women's studies, political science, public policy, and religious studies, as well as scholarship emerging from non-Western nations and contexts can prove to be a rich ground for ideas that can aid in conceptualizing a fuller theoretical base and practical strategies for transnational public relations.

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